

Studies by S. D. Goitein

S. D. Goitein, historian of the medieval Middle East, ethnographer, and Arabist, published the studies below in a variety of journals between the years 1954 and 1987. A Wikipedia entry ([Shelomo Dov Goitein](#)) describes his life and achievements, and has additional bibliography. Studies of documents from the [Cairo Genizah](#) were an important focus of his work.

[From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries](#), from *Speculum*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Part 1 (Apr., 1954), pp. 181-197.

[The Unity of the Mediterranean World in the "Middle" Middle Ages](#), from *Studia Islamica*, No. 12 (1960), pp. 29-42.

[Between Hellenism and Renaissance—Islam, the Intermediate Civilization](#), from *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June 1963), pp. 217-233.

[The Commercial Mail Service in Medieval Islam](#), from *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1964), pp. 118-123.

[Commercial and Family Partnerships in the Countries of Medieval Islam](#), from *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (September 1964), pp. 315-337.

[Artisans en Méditerranée orientale au haut moyen âge](#), from *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 19e Année, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 1964), pp. 847-868.

[Bankers Accounts from the Eleventh Century A.D.](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 9, No. 1/2 (Nov., 1966), pp. 28-66.

[A Jewish Business Woman of the Eleventh Century](#), from *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 57 (1967), pp. 225-242.

[Formal Friendship in the Medieval Near East](#), from *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 115, No. 6 (Dec. 30, 1971), pp. 484-489.

The Cairo Geniza:

[The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Muslim Civilisation](#), from *Studia Islamica*, No. 3 (1955), pp. 75-91.

[New Light on the Beginnings of the Kārim Merchants](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Apr., 1958), pp. 175-184.

[The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History](#), from *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1960), pp. 91-100.

[The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area as Reflected in the Records of the Cairo Geniza](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Aug., 1961), pp. 168-197.

[Slaves and Slavegirls in the Cairo Geniza Records](#), from *Arabica*, T. 9, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1962), pp. 1-20.

[The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times: A Preliminary Study of the Relevant Geniza Material](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Aug., 1965), pp. 1-46.

[Appendix: The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times \(JESHO VIII, pp. 1-46\): Additions](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 9, No. 1/2 (Nov., 1966), pp. 67-68.

[Erratum to JESHO VIII 1965 p. 35: The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times](#), from *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), p. 112.

[Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza](#), from *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 50, No. 3 (1987), pp. 449-464.

Goitein's Writings at Internet Archive:

[A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza](#), 10th-13th centuries (all five volumes, 1967-1993).

[Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders](#) (1973).

[India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents From the Cairo Geniza](#), by S. D. Goitein and M. A. Friedman (2008).

[Studies of the Geniza Documents](#), multiple authors.

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From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

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FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO INDIA

Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

By S. D. GOITEIN*

THIS is a first announcement and a preliminary report about a collection of letters, legal documents, accounts and other papers related to the mediaeval trade to India, in particular during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There is no need to emphasize the importance of that trade. It formed the backbone of mediaeval international economics and was a powerful factor in the formation of that great civilization, which we are wont to call "Islamic" and which was intermediary in time between the late Roman and the modern eras and intermediary in space between India and China on the one hand and the European countries on the other. Finally, it was the search for the direct route to the Far East and for the control of the Indian trade which led to the most vital geographic discoveries and inaugurated modern times.

It is not surprising, therefore, that students of mediaeval history eagerly searched Arabic and other Oriental literary sources for information about the trade to the Far East and that a good deal of material was brought together at a comparatively early stage. Such a standard work as W. Heyd's *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen âge* (1885-86) or a classic compilation such as G. Ferrand's *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turcs relatifs à l'extrême Orient* (1913-14) already contains most of the material known from literary sources. Ever since, down to the present day, Indian, European, and American scholars have contributed valuable special studies to the elucidation of various aspects of Far Eastern trade. However, no documents of Islamic provenience concerning the Indian trade have so far been made available. In particular from the period covered in this article, the eleventh and twelfth centuries, only a few remnants of Muslim archives have survived;¹ moreover, the various publications of Arabic papyri and papers, which have appeared so far, obviously

* I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Professor R. S. Lopez of Yale University, who read the manuscript of this article and made valuable suggestions for its improvement.

¹ Cf. Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'orient musulman* (Paris, 1943), pp. 19-21.

do not contain material about our subject.² In view of this situation, the present writer has made it his task to collect and, if possible, to publish all the documents concerning the Indian trade coming from another source, the so-called Geniza,³ i.e., documents written in Hebrew characters, but mostly in Arabic language, originating from a synagogue in Old Cairo and dispersed at present in many libraries all over the world.

A "Geniza" is a chamber adjacent to a synagogue (or found in a cemetery), in which papers and books covered with Hebrew letters may be put aside for storage. According to an old Jewish custom — which has its parallel in Christian and Muslim usage — no writing which may contain the name of God should be destroyed by fire or otherwise; it should be buried like the human body. Such "Genizas" are found all over the Jewish world,⁴ but only the dry soil of Egypt has preserved the papers thus interred for a thousand years and more. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many flourishing Jewish communities existed in Egypt, and it may well be that in future the "Genizas" of some of these may be discovered. For the time being, however, only the Geniza of Fustat or Old Cairo, which was in actual use up to the nineteenth century, has been made accessible to scholars. Much of its contents came to Russia in the course of the last century (largely through the efforts of a high dignitary of the Orthodox Church) and may still be found in Leningrad (where Geniza studies were made by an American scholar⁵ as late as 1932) or may have been moved meanwhile to Moscow. Some sporadic material came to western Europe in the early eighteen hundred and nineties. But it was only in 1897 that Solomon S. Schechter made a systematic search of the Old Cairo Geniza and brought to Cambridge (England) over a hundred thousand leaves, mostly parts of old, often unknown books, but also huge quantities of documents. Besides the University Library of Cambridge, the Bodleian Library of Oxford, the British Museum and the Jewish Theological Semi-

² A survey of the publications on Arabic Papyrology is found on pp. 71-73, and p. 122 of Sauvaget's book, to which A. Grohmann's *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo, 1952) may be added. Volume iv of Grohmann's monumental series, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, has just come out, and the preparations for Volumes v and vi, I understand, are well advanced. In addition, Dr Grohmann, Dr N. Abbott of Chicago, and others have published a number of texts not listed in Sauvaget's survey. On my query as to whether the unpublished volumes of the Egyptian Library or any other publication contained documents on the Indian trade, Professor Grohmann kindly replied (26 October 1953): "As far as I know, there are no Arabic papyri dealing with the trade between Egypt and India, and there is nothing on this subject contained in my volumes."

³ The term Geniza (in singular and without quotation marks) in this paper — as in scholarly usage in general — refers to the Geniza of Old Cairo, and not to the generic term "Geniza," explained in the text later on.

⁴ Only a few years ago, many new "Genizas" came into existence, when, during the mass exodus of the Jews from Yemen in South Arabia most of them disposed of their old manuscripts and buried them in their deserted houses, synagogues, and cemeteries. It is not impossible that some of this material may be unearthed and offered for sale to Western travellers in that country.

⁵ The late Professor Solomon L. Skoss of the Dropsie College in Philadelphia, who worked that year on the literary Geniza treasures of Leningrad, informed me in the summer of 1952 that he had seen there a box with a label indicating that it contained 700 documents, and that he was told that many other such boxes were kept in the library. Professor Jacob Mann, who visited Leningrad a few years before Skoss, to work on that collection, published a few of the documents contained in it.

nary of America, New York, also possess great treasures of Geniza-material, and there exist many other collections, large and small.

During the half century since the Geniza documents were made accessible to western scholarship much research has been done on them. Besides Schechter, the names of Jacob Mann and of S. Asaph, who died only recently, should be particularly, mentioned. Many other scholars took part in the reading, translating and discussing of the Geniza papers. Nevertheless, there still is much to be done. Economic history has hardly been touched, although the material for it is particularly copious. To a considerable extent this is also true of social history, and even political and military events may get new illustration from a more systematic study of these old documents.⁶ Typical of the attitude of an older generation of scholars is a remark like the following, found in the printed catalogue of a very famous library, with regard to an interesting Geniza document: "business letter and therefore valueless".

In addition to lack of interest, the difficulty of the texts acted as a deterrent. It lies in the very nature of the Geniza papers — leaves put aside after they had lost their usefulness — that many of them are fragmentary, torn or effaced and only partly legible, or that they represent the remnants of a bigger unit, which is either lost or dispersed in various libraries or in different collections of the same library.⁷ Furthermore, their language often is rather colloquial or technical; no Arabic (or Hebrew) dictionary gives the exact meaning of many a word or phrase found in them. Only a complete survey of the whole extant Geniza documents, a

⁶ Cf. the present writer's recent publications of Geniza material of historical content:

1. "Contemporary Letters on the Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders," *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, III, 162-177. The Arabic originals of these letters were published in *Zion Quarterly*, XVII, 129-147.
2. "Obadya, a Norman Proselyte," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, IV, 74-84.
3. "Letters from Palestine in Crusaders' Times" (H.=Hebrew), *Yerushalayim Quarterly*, v, 1953 (3 documents). H.
4. "New Information about Palestine in Crusaders Times," *Cassuto Memorial Volume*, 1954 (7 documents). H.
5. "Two Eyewitness Reports on an Expedition of the King of Kish (Qais) against Aden," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London), July 1954.
6. "Letters and Old Documents from the Kaufmann Collection," *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, 1950. H.
7. "A Letter from the African Port 'Aidhab," *Tarbiz Quarterly*, XXI, 185-191.
8. "A Report on Messianic Troubles in Baghdad in 1120/1," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1952, pp. 57-76.
9. "A Jewish Addict to Sufism," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1953, pp. 37-49.
10. "The Jewry of Yemen between the Gaonate of Egypt and the Exilarchs of Baghdad," *Sinai Monthly*, 1953, pp. 125-137. H.
11. "The Last Phase of Yehuda Halevi's Life in the Light of the Geniza Papers," *Tarbiz Quarterly*, XXIV, 1-24 (1954). H.
12. "New Documents from the Cairo Geniza," *José Millás Vallicrosa Jubilee Volume* (Barcelona, 1954).
13. "The Dispute over the Prayer for the Head of the Community," *Ignaz Goldziher Memorial Volume*, vol. 2 (1954).

⁷ To be sure, many documents are complete and in excellent condition. This, besides inner evidence, indicates that they have been deposited in the Geniza after having formed part of a public or private archive. See below, p. 192.

study of their vocabulary and grammatical usage, their prosopography and legal, as well as historical, aspects, can provide the tools for an exact understanding of each single text. Such an undertaking is indeed envisaged by Professor David Baneth of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who has founded the study of the Arabic Geniza on a sound philological basis,⁸ and the present writer. In the course of the preparation of this survey it became apparent that it would be useful to single out units containing characteristic subject matter requiring individual study. A subject particularly suited for this purpose is the material related to the Indian trade, while, e.g., that referring to Mediterranean seafaring and business is so vast that separate aspects of it should first be treated.

So far, only very few Geniza documents on the trade to India (about ten) have been published and, with the exception of two,⁹ only in Hebrew publications. They revealed, however, such a wide interest of the community in this commercial activity, that an exaggerated idea of the number of such documents to be found in the Geniza was created. An otherwise reliable expert on Judaeo-Arabic matters wrote that almost every Geniza letter contained some reference to the Indian trade. Nothing could be more remote from the truth. After having scanned practically all the collections of Geniza papers (outside Russia, of course), I can state that only about two percent of these papers contain references to the trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa; on the other hand, these papers are mostly of considerable length, and hence their total of lines would score a far higher percentage. All in all, over 130 items have been brought together of late, that is, over ten times as much as published during the previous stage of Geniza research. There is no need to emphasize that quantity means quality: a more or less reliable interpretation of the documents is possible only now, after a considerable amount of evidence has at last been brought together.

As specified below,¹⁰ the documents come from eleven different collections, pre-

⁸ In addition to his own publications, Professor Baneth has translated, or revised the translations of, almost all of the Arabic Geniza documents published by S. Asaph.

⁹ One, a letter from India, appears in English translation in E. N. Adler's *Jewish Travellers* (New York, 1931), pp. 100–102. A facsimile and German translation appear in the same author's *Von Ghetto zu Ghetto* (Stuttgart, 1909), p. 198. The translation — although revised by a famous Orientalist — is quite faulty — which is natural, because at the time of the first publication this was the only item concerning Far Eastern trade known from the Geniza.

The second item, a long family letter sent from Egypt to India, was published in both a photograph and a transcript, as well as in an English translation in R. Gottheil and W. H. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah* (New York, 1927), pp. 44 ff. Both the transcript and the translation need thorough revision. The editors failed to recognize that those mediaeval letter writers used to continue, after having completed a page, on the margin and even the top (upside down), and went on over leaf only after having made full use of all space available on one page. The erroneous arrangement of the text is matched by the many mistakes in detail — for which the editors are hardly to blame, as they had to deal at the time with rather unique material. The excellent photograph provided replaces the original manuscript almost completely.

¹⁰ The documents are to be found in the following libraries: University Library, Cambridge (slightly over one half of the total); Westminster College, Cambridge; Bodleian Library, Oxford; British Museum, London; Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York; Dropsie College, Philadelphia; Freer Collection, Washington (published in facsimile); Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; Hebrew University and National Library, Jerusalem; Schocken Research Institute, Jerusalem; a private collection

served in four different continents. Most of them have not yet been catalogued, and even where there exists a printed catalogue of Geniza fragments (e.g., the Bodleian Library of Oxford) the catalogue, as a rule, does not indicate, whether a document has anything to do with the trade to India or not. The documents collected show the greatest possible variety as to their length, the care taken in their execution and in their state of preservation. They comprise rolls of eighty to ninety lines, beautifully copied by business clerks, and short letters of fifteen to twenty lines hastily written down by a merchant, e.g., at the moment of his embarkation in Aden for India or while answering a correspondent. There are legal deeds, carefully worded and skillfully copied by a trained scribe, and there are accounts scribbled down in a hardly legible hand on the back of some letters. About two thirds of the documents are complete or almost complete; however, even those in a fragmentary state are mostly of considerable length, and sometimes even a small fragment may contain a valuable piece of information. All the documents have been copied by me either from the originals or from photostats, and although a number of problems remain to be solved, the texts are, as a whole, entirely intelligible. Their language is naturally of a highly technical character, as may be gauged from the fact that a card index of technical terms, which does not yet comprise all the texts, contains already about 650 items. A full edition, with a translation into English and a detailed commentary, is now in preparation. The following lines are intended to give the reader an idea about the character and content of these papers and to point out some aspects of the Indian trade, which may be illustrated by them. It is hoped that the edition of the documents now in preparation will benefit by queries and discussions arising from this article.

The majority of the Geniza papers related to the Indian trade are *letters*. Some were sent from Aden, India, or East Africa to Old Cairo, or vice versa; others — the most interesting ones — were sent from Aden to India or vice versa, and even from one town in India to another. Still others were exchanged between Arabia and East Africa or between one place and another in Yemen. One wonders how most of these letters happened to be preserved in Old Cairo. Many of them must have remained in India for a considerable number of years and then had to travel the perilous way by sea from India via Arabia to an East African port, then through the desert to a town on the Nile and finally down the river to Cairo. Obviously, the letters were kept for reference, and indeed reference to previous correspondence is found frequently. It is a testimony to the quality of their paper and ink that so many letters should have come down to us so well preserved. Be-

in Cairo. I wish to express here my sincerest thanks to the librarians of these institutions. In the very considerable collection of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris I did not come across a single item dealing with the Indian trade. The main stock of documents contained in the Kaufmann Collection of the Hungarian Academy, Budapest, disappeared a long time ago. For the benefit of librarians, to whom this stock may be offered for sale, I wish to remark that the famous Orientalist I. Goldziher saw this collection and wrote a short article about the addresses contained in it (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, LV, 54–59), which makes identification easily possible. The remnants described by me (see above, note 6, #6) contain nothing about India.

cause of precariousness of communications, letters were usually sent in duplicates in two different ships. Concerning a particularly urgent letter it was stated that copies were sent in three different ships and that in each instance two copies were sent, one in Arabic and one in Hebrew — the latter precaution certainly because letters often became illegible through damage by water, a fact also mentioned in the documents. Curiously enough, in no less than five instances, I found fragments of two copies of the same letter, invariably written by different hands. In certain cases, where the handwriting of the employer is known, this shows that a business house employed more than one clerk. However, even a big merchant was not always a good scribe, as can be seen either from his signature on a document, or from the fact that, while in India, such a man would ask his business friend, who “was decorated with the crown of scribedom,” to write a long letter for him. It seems that everybody was supposed to read Hebrew as well as Arabic, but not everybody at all was fluent in writing.¹¹

Most significantly, I have not come across a single business letter sent from a place southeast of Egypt to a Mediterranean port or vice versa. Only a few sporadic family letters of this description — sent from Aden to Sicily or from an East African port to Tunisia or Tripolitania are found in the documents I have collected. This is the more astonishing, as (a) Indian goods are frequently mentioned in business letters from the Mediterranean and vice versa, and (b) most of the India merchants hailed from North Africa and Spain, while those who lived in Egypt were, as a rule,¹² equally active in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Thus Halfon ben Nethan’el of Cairo returned in spring 1134 from India to Aden after a prolonged stay there; in spring 1135 he was in Cairo and during the same year we find him already in Spain and Morocco. Similar wide activities could be traced with regard to other Cairene merchants, and we learn from the documents that people from as far as Morocco would make the long journey from their homeland to India more than once in their life. Despite this close connection between the Mediterranean and the Indian trade, no business

¹¹ A striking example of this deficiency in the art of writing in an otherwise literate society was noted by me during my field work with the Yemenite immigrants to Israel. Once I talked to a man who appealed to me as particularly well versed in Hebrew literature and in general a cultivated person. However, when I asked him to write down some information for me, his letters looked like those of a child making its first attempts in writing (and indeed like many a signature in a Geniza document). When I expressed my astonishment, he said, almost contemptuously: “I am not a clerk; from where should I get fluency in writing?”

This state of affairs is reflected in their course of education. Every child learns writing in its first year of schooling, but only as a means of acquiring a knowledge of the letters, not as an end in itself. From the second year on, there is no writing at all. Only in the higher grades — which not everybody attains — one day (usually Thursday) is set aside for copying books, and then, too, the teacher seems not to be eager to teach the class as a whole, but to develop the talents of those with a special inclination for calligraphy. The Muslim system of education was based on the same principles.

¹² There are, of course, exceptions. Thus, hundreds of letters referring to the Mediterranean trade have been preserved from the archive of Nahrai ben Nissim, an important businessman living in Cairo in the second part of the eleventh century. So far, I have found only one letter which shows that he had also business relations with Aden, and these as a sideline. There may be found some more, but Nahrai certainly was no India merchant.

letters exchanged between those two geographical units have been found. This can hardly be mere chance — it rather indicates that the two formed different commercial units, with Egypt serving as intermediary.

Business letters in my collection of India papers invariably open with polite phrases, sometimes rather flowery, but often very dignified, which occupy about four to sixteen lines, depending on the circumstances; five to eight is the most common number. From the wording of the preamble one can immediately recognize the respective social position of the two correspondents, as well as the state of business between them. Unfortunately, the recipients had the habit of cutting off the preamble — obviously it was not needed for reference — and used the free space on the back as scrap paper. Since that space often also contained the address, this habit is, from our point of view, rather disappointing.

In the first part of the main body of the letter, the arrival of the goods, letters or messengers sent by the addressee was acknowledged or their loss through shipwreck or pirates was announced. The letter then described what action had been taken in this respect. In the second part, the writer would deal with his own shipments, and personal or communal affairs would also be discussed, though very briefly as a rule. The most characteristic part of a business letter of that time is the enumeration of presents sent to the addressee. For doing business with or for somebody was regarded as a favor, which had to be repaid, and business relations in general were treated almost as personal friendship. From the lists of such presents, as well as from those of household goods ordered, one can form a vivid picture of the private life of the foreign merchants in India. The businessmen of Aden usually got from India as presents copper or brass vessels, for which they often had sent in advance the raw material from Aden. The letter invariably closes with greetings, sometimes short and perfunctory, but occasionally also very detailed and elaborate, and it is from these that we often are enabled to identify both the sender and the recipient. As a rule, the letters are not signed, but end with the word *Shalom* ("Peace"), which is always repeated when the sender adds an additional note, or a phrase expressing Messianic hopes.

There is no need to emphasize that our knowledge of mediaeval economics will be considerably enriched by the innumerable details about goods, prices, exchange of money, finance, custom duties, package and transport, as well as the whole technique of business, which are to be found in these letters. Thus, for instance, the question raised by R. S. Lopez in *The Cambridge History of Economics* (II, 309), how the Muslim world made good its apparently unfavorable balance of gold in its trade with India, would find some illustration in the Geniza papers. From the letters and documents connected with an important lawsuit of 1097–98, which will be described later on in this article, it appears that over ninety percent of the goods brought from India then were acquired with merchandise imported from North Africa and Egypt, and only about ten percent with gold, and the same impression is received from other papers of that time. As late as the middle of the twelfth century a lot of goods went from Aden to India, such as silk, copper, lead, and certain chemicals. It seems, however, that by that time it was generally regarded more profitable to pay with gold; for even when one merchant shipped

silk, which was then the staple merchandise going to India, he explained to his correspondent that he did so because the local (Maliki) dinars were at that time at a very low rate. Thus it seems that the traditional view¹³ that the Indian trade was a one-way traffic reflects the situation only of certain periods, and even then very incompletely. Payment was largely made in kind. There is enormous material on this question in our papers. It seems, however, that each case will have to be considered separately. Thus, Madmun, the head of the Jewish merchants in Aden (see below), while dispatching a consignment of sixty camel loads (3000 Ratl) of lac to Cairo, sent with it 100 Qasi-robies to cover the expenses of the custom duties in the African port of Su'akin or any other port the ship might touch. Likewise, he sent eight camel loads of pepper to be sold and used for the custom duties at the terminal port of Aidhab and the cost of transport from there to Cairo. In the same letter, however, contrary to usage, he did not order merchandise (except a long list of household goods), but expressly demanded payment in gold or silver alone. That transaction, by the way, was a joint undertaking of the head of the Jewish merchants in Aden and of Bilal ben Jarir, the famous wazir and actual ruler of Southern Yemen at that time. Another joint enterprise of the two was the building and equipment of a ship trading direct between Aden and Ceylon. On its maiden voyage the boat carried also three Jewish goldsmiths, one of whom had come from North Africa, who obviously sought their fortune by settling in the Indies (see below). The letters are also a true mirror of the *ethos* of these businessmen, which strikes us as a healthy and, to some extent, even a noble one. In those days of the rule of barbaric military castes, it was the merchant who stood for individuality and adventure and kept the flag of freedom flying.

As mentioned above, some of the private letters of the Indian merchants also have found their way into the Geniza. The merchants would send home presents and merchandise for the use and the maintenance of their families and relatives, as well as donations for pious purposes or religious dignitaries. Announcements of such shipments and thanks for their receipt, as well as anxious enquiries about the testament of a deceased donator, have been found. It seems that a great many people depended on this trade. A successful merchant with a grown daughter out in the East would not marry her off locally but would try to get one of his own folk to come out and marry her and take over his business and accumulated riches. Owing to the long separation,¹⁴ marriages sometimes became shaky, which

¹³ It has found its most characteristic expression in Ibn Fadlallah al-Omari's famous story of his Sheikh, who proved the truth of alchemy by saying that during the last three thousand years all the gold of the world had gone to India, but never a piece of gold went out of that country. How else could this deficiency in gold have been made good, if not by the means of alchemy? See O. Spies, *Ibn Fadlallah al-Omari's Bericht über Indien* (Leipzig, 1943), p. 63. The report is from the fourteenth century. To be sure, R. S. Lopez (*The Cambridge Economic History*, II, 309) says: "The fact seems to be that the balance was not really unfavourable."

¹⁴ As a rule, the merchants did not take their wives with them to the East. Rather, young men would go out to the India route and marry there, staying for the better part of their lives in the East and coming back after having amassed sufficient wealth. I have not come across a single case of a man marrying a second wife, while away on business, but there can be no doubt that the romantic

would lead to a long correspondence, partly preserved. Although not bearing directly on business, these private letters are a most valuable source for the social history of the mediaeval overseas commerce.

The second largest group of Geniza papers referring to the Indian trade are documents of legal character. As a rule, a merchant embarking on so long a journey did business not only for himself but also for others. When he came home, or even when he returned only from India to Aden, he would deposit with the local rabbinical court a detailed statement of all his dealings in the interest of his customer. Such a statement was signed by at least two witnesses and forwarded to Cairo, which served as a clearing-house for commercial, as well as for legal matters. The customer, in his turn, would write out, before the court, a quittance, which also would be properly countersigned and sent on. Naturally, things did not always go smoothly; the resulting disputes were aired before the rabbinical court, which had largely the character of a merchants' court, since many of its members were well trained businessmen. Reason and expediency, rather than a written law, formed the base of their decisions. A considerable number of pages from the record book of the Cairene court dealing with the Indian trade have actually been preserved. By a particular stroke of luck, I was able to collect the complete proceedings — nine sessions extending almost over a year — of a single action, carried on in 1097–98, the gist of which will be given later on. As shipwreck was a recurrent feature of the Indian commerce, statements about men and goods which were lost, or goods that were later retrieved, were made before the next court and forwarded to the parties concerned, or rather to the court of the town where the parties presumably lived. Sometimes the India merchants quarrelled over matters other than business. For instance, this happened when one of them abandoned a slave girl who had born him a child, in Berbera on the African coast — an action highly resented by his companions. A great source of discord were the communal affairs; these were not unrelated to business, as the safety and efficiency of commerce was dependent on them.

Of highest importance in this connection was the office of the "Trustee of the Merchants" (in Arabic *Wakil*, in Hebrew *Pegid ha-Soharim*), a kind of head of the merchant guild, about whose position, rights, and activities the Geniza, if properly searched, could provide extensive information. As far as the India papers are concerned, we are particularly well informed about the *Wakils* of Aden. At the end of the eleventh century this post was occupied by Hasan (Hebrew *Yefeth*) ben Bundar. He was followed by his son Madmun, who died in 1151 as head of the Jewish communities of Yemen and, having acquired even the title of *Nagid*

aspects contributed to the success of the Indian trade. The beauty and sweetness of the women of Yemen are praised both in Hebrew and Arabic contemporary literature. The record book of the Rabbinical Court of San'a, the capital of Yemen, from the eighteenth century, which certainly reflects mediaeval life in general, reports that Jewish merchants in India sent an emissary to Yemen with the mandate to fetch for them marriageable girls. It is remarkable that in the documents drawn up before the Court the girls are assured of expenses for the return journey from India and a handsome sum of money in case *they* did not like the men proposing to them. That manuscript record book, which contains much other interesting material, was given to me by Mr Y. Rasabi, himself a Yemenite possessing a completely modern outlook and real capacity for scientific research.

(Prince), left his position to his sons Halfon and Bundar.¹⁵ Madmun was recognized both by the Jewish exilarch of Baghdad, which then was under Seljuk rule, and by the head of the Jewish community of Egypt, which then was Fatimid. He was "the Trustee of all the lords of the seas and the deserts," i.e., had agreements, in the interests of his clients, with the many petty rulers (or pirates) who controlled the routes of the Arabian and Indian seas, as well as the land route from Aden to Egypt. To his *Dar* (storehouse) were brought the goods, which were to be divided up between the various merchants, and the goods of the defunct or the shipwrecked. He sold and bought for the foreign merchants, according to the mandates given to him by them, and served also as a banker, for the foreign merchants left with him their money as a deposit (*Wadd'ah*) and made payments through him to others. However, it was not always easy for the Trustee of the Merchants to keep the balance between his manifold obligations, and not everybody was satisfied with his sometimes high-handed ways; all this is echoed in our documents, as well as in poems in his honor, another historical source, which should not be neglected.

I feel it would be premature if I tried to define the position of the *Wakil* or *Peqid ha-Soharim* in comparison with that of the heads or the overseers of the merchants in other communities of the Muslim, Byzantine, or Western European countries of those days. For, as stated above, the Geniza contains considerable material about that office; much of it is not connected with the Far Eastern trade and, therefore, I have not yet studied it thoroughly. It is, however, my definite impression that the merchants, who have left us their letters and documents in the Geniza of Old Cairo, never belonged to a rigidly organized guild; likewise, the position of their head seems to have been largely informal. A merchant, who did oversea business, naturally had to give power of attorney (*Wakala*) to a business friend abroad, who would sell his goods for him, buy other goods and send them to him, as well as carry through for him the lawsuits which might originate in the foreign town. Now, a business man, who was particularly successful and prosperous, would get many such mandates, until he and his descendants, if they were equally capable, would become the mandatories and trustees, to whom the foreign merchants confided their affairs, especially if they had no business friends of their own abroad. Likewise, the local merchants would make use of his wide relations in order to get a share in oversea business. The position of the Farhi family in Damascus in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, or the house of Valero in Jerusalem later on, seems to have been similar, and there is, of course, the Shabbender at-Tujjar, the king of the merchants, of Arabian Nights' fame.

The Wakil's position would be particularly strong, if he succeeded in making appropriate arrangements with the lords of the sea and land routes leading to and from his place for the safety and the welfare of his clients. (Reference to such arrangements I have found so far only for Madmun of Aden, cf. l. 4 above.) As

¹⁵ His grandson was also a prominent merchant and philanthropist; however, so far, I have not yet found the title "Trustee of the Merchants" attached to his name.

a Jew, he would seek some official recognition from the Jewish oecumenical authorities. Such recognition would be given in the form of high sounding titles — Madmun possessed seven — but would also be of practical importance. For the religious authority held would give the Trustee power to check infringements on business morals. A merchant who did not pay his debts, or evaded his obligations otherwise, could be temporarily banned from the Jewish community or, in an extreme case, even be excommunicated. Therefore, religious authority gave, to a certain extent, direct control over business. In Madmun's time insolvent debtors used to abscond from India to Ceylon. I believe that Madmun began to operate a direct shipping line from Aden to Ceylon and to encourage Jewish goldsmiths to settle there (see above) not only for the sake of his private business, but in order to get some control over things in that distant island¹⁶ — and it is possible that the Muslim ruler of Aden, who was Madmun's partner in that undertaking, had a similar intention.

All in all, it seems to me that the office of the Wakil was a position acquired first *de facto* and confirmed afterwards by secular and religious authorities *de jure*, rather than a post to which a man was elected by some formal procedure. This statement, however, may have to be qualified in the light of subsequent finds.

As we have seen, letters and legal documents form the main stock of Geniza papers related to Far Eastern trade. Comparatively little has been preserved of accounts, perhaps because there were no religious scruples about destroying them. Most of those which have been found come from the family archive of a Tunisian merchant, who spent most of his life in India and was also, like many a Muslim merchant, a scholar and poet. As his name¹⁷ indicates, his family possibly came from Spain. About thirty items coming from his archive have been found of late, and the accounts included in them are of high interest.

To illustrate the type of material concerning the trade to India found in the Geniza papers, I would like to outline the background of the lawsuit of 1097–98 already mentioned. The defendant bore the family name of Lebdi, which means "originating from the town Lebda," i.e., Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (modern Libya). As he is sometimes called "the Tripolitanian merchant," he obviously hailed from that town, although people bearing that name had been living in Cairo before that time. In 1102, for the very considerable sum of 300 dinars, he acquired part of a house in Cairo, and since then obviously the family became resident there. Documents have been found in the Geniza with regard to him, unconnected with the lawsuit which will be discussed further on. Other docu-

¹⁶ Of course, Ceylon is a large country. But so is the western coast of India, which was frequented by the Near Eastern Merchants. No less than twelve ports on that coast are mentioned in our documents. Still, "Aden and India" were regarded by the Jewish authorities as one juridical diocese, for, despite the vastness of those countries, the places actually visited and partly inhabited by the foreign merchants were limited in number, and comparatively easily controlled. The early settlements of Europeans in those parts show striking parallels to this state of affairs.

¹⁷ Ibn Yaju, which (as Professor Baneth suggests) may be pronounced "Yago," a Romanesque form of the name Jacob. The family name Ju, or Jau, which may be an abridgement of Yaju, was common among Spanish Jews already in the tenth century.

ments concern his son, who was an India merchant like his father, and returned from a successful trip to the East in 1135; his grand-daughter, whose dowry is described in detail; his descendants in the sixth generation, who, in 1240, ran a sugar factory in Cairo, which they had inherited from their father. It seems that all the material, including that of the lawsuit of 1097-98, comes from an archive of the Lebdi family.

In considering the documents of the Lebdi lawsuit, one has to bear in mind that they refer only to commercial activities which gave rise to litigation; of such activities as were carried out smoothly, no record was kept later on. Therefore we learn only of a fraction of Lebdi's tradings during his trip to India. However, the little we know is interesting enough.

Before setting out to India, Lebdi went westwards to Tunisia, which then was one of the most flourishing countries of the Mediterranean world. In Mahdiya in Southern Tunisia, then capital of the country, the *Dayyan* (Chief Justice or Rabbi) — he, by the way, bore a name famous in Hebrew literature: Ibn Labrat — confided to Lebdi a shipment of corals. In addition, Lebdi took corals with him to India on his own account. That a religious and legal dignitary should engage in commerce is, of course, a normal thing in the mercantile world of the early Middle Ages in the East: the variegated business activities of the Patriarchs of Alexandria have been described recently, while *kadis* are frequent customers or mandatories in the Geniza papers.¹⁸

The main starting point for the trip to India was, of course, Cairo. Here Lebdi received a big consignment from no lesser man than the local Trustee of the Merchants, Yekuthiel, the son of the Doctor.¹⁹ The consignment, described in full detail in the proceedings, comprised (a) textiles of the most different kind and provenience, including Russian linen, which, as is known from later sources, was held in high esteem in India;²⁰ (b) silver vessels; (c) copper vessels;²¹ (d) drugs of various types, such as scammony, storax, alkali and dodder of thyme coming from Crete; (e) corals; (f) a bag containing twenty newly minted gold dinars. To this were added custom duties and expenses up to Kus in Upper Egypt, for there ended the travel on the Nile and one had to change over to camels, which crossed the desert to 'Aidhab, the terminus of ships going to India.

¹⁸ George R. Monks, "The Church of Alexandria and the City's Economic Life in the Sixth Century," *SPECULUM*, xxviii, 356-362. In Busir on the Nile delta, there arrived on a single day "the ship of the Kadi of Tyre and the ship of the Kadi of Tripoli (in Syria)" together with ten ships from Sicily (Ms. Adler 2727, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York). A *kadi*, like a Jewish rabbi or *Dayyan*, of course, was both a religious and a legal official.

¹⁹ His son was also Peqid ha-Soharim, and, in addition, a skilled scribe. His grandson and namesake, however, returned to the profession of his great-grandfather and became a doctor.

²⁰ Cf. R. B. Serjeant, *Ars Islamica*, vol. 13, No. 4, p. 84, note 71; vol. 15, No. 6, p. 48; vol. 13, No. 4, p. 83; Otto Spies, *Bericht über Indien*, p. 53: only those people on whom the Sultan bestowed the Russian linen were allowed to wear it. From our document, which precedes the "Report" by 150 years, it appears that at that early time, Russian linen must have been quite a usual commodity for export to India.

²¹ The movement of copper and copper vessels from East to West and vice versa, which looms very large in these papers, needs a special study.

Yekuthiel, the Trustee, gave Lebdi very strict instructions. One half of the consignment was to be handed over in kind to his counterpart in Aden, the Wakil Hasan ben Bundar (see above p. 189), who was to buy an equal value of pepper in "Manibar" (Malabar). The other half should go with Lebdi to "Nahrawara" (Anhilvarah), an inland town in Gujarat north of Bombay, where it was to be exchanged for lac.

Lebdi travelled the usual way from Cairo-Fustat, where he had to pay the first customs, to Akhmim in Upper Egypt, another customs station, and Kus, where again custom was paid; after having crossed the desert to 'Aidhab, he sailed straight to Dahlak, obviously without touching the ports of Su'akin and Bade'.²² Dahlak was then the main southern port of the western border of the Red Sea; its place has been taken today by nearby Massawa. In Dahlak he found that textiles brought good prices, and therefore, contrary to his mandate, he sold Yekuthiel's stuff, handing over the sums realized to Ibn Bundar after his arrival in Aden. In Dahlak he also disposed of a part of the drugs. The balance, together with the metals, was delivered by him to the Adenese Trustee, with the sole exception of a certain quantity of dry storax, which he took with him to India, together with Ibn Labrat's, Yekuthiel's, and his own corals. All prices of these dealings are given both in the local money and in Egyptian currency.

From Aden to India Lebdi travelled in the company of Ibn Bundar's brothers; he took a route different from all the other India merchants mentioned in these documents, landing first in Tiz, which was then regarded as the westernmost point of India, where he had some unpleasant experience (not specified in the records). From there he proceeded alone northeastwards to Anhilvarah, where he obviously passed more than one summer, doing business for himself and his Tunisian and Egyptian customers, as well as for Ibn Bundar of Aden. Most of the purchases for the latter were made at Lebdi's own account, which was a disaster for him, for two of his shipments to Ibn Bundar, one containing mostly silk cloth and the other consisting mainly of steel, perished on his way back. Against Yekuthiel's orders, he did not sell the latter's corals, and consequently, did not buy for him lac, but exchanged the corals for beads (*kharaz* or *khuraizat*), most of which were lost at sea. Naturally, it was a moot point, who of the two should bear the loss. For the equivalent of the dry storax he offered to his customer a

²² The most characteristic detail about mediaeval navigation to be learned from these documents is the fact that the ocean going vessels usually covered long distances and did not call even on important ports on their way. Even ships going from Arabia to India would by no means call at all the bigger ports on the West coast of India, but only at two or (at most) three, and a merchant having business in another town than that touched by his boat had to make special arrangements. The ships were called according to their destination ("that bound for Broach," or Tana, or Daibul, or Kul-lam, or Malabar) and cargoes had to be sent and orders to be placed in each ship separately for each port. The technical reason for this usage obviously was that the most dangerous part of the voyage was the moment, when a ship tried either to enter the sea or to break through the coastal waves on its return. Shipwreck is reported in these documents particularly, but of course not exclusively, for cases like these. It was no different in the Mediterranean sea. Ships used to founder just outside the Pharos of Alexandria; see G. R. Monks, "The Church of Alexandria and the City's Economic Life in the Sixth Century," *SPECULUM*, XXVIII, 359-360.

choice of whatever he wished from the goods he had brought from India, while the Tunisian rabbi was promised three flasks of musk for his very mediocre corals.

On his way back from India, Lebdi experienced shipwreck and "all kinds of terrors," but landed safely with part of his goods in Mirbat, then a well known seaport in southeastern Arabia, approximately occupying the commercial position of Mukalla in Hadramaut today. Strangely enough, although he had to do a lot of business in Aden, he went from Mirbat straight to Dahlak, the Red Sea port mentioned above. This again seems to show (cf. note 22 above) that the ocean going vessels of that time had their fixed routes and did not call even at such an important harbor on their way as Aden when they were not bound for it. Lebdi informed the Trustee of the Merchants of Aden, that he was prepared to travel back from Dahlak to Aden in order to settle his accounts and to fetch Yekuthiel's and his own merchandise, in particular pepper and iron, which the Trustee had ordered from India. The latter, however, replied that a big consignment of his own, which would include also Lebdi's orders, would soon leave Aden for Dahlak, whereupon Lebdi continued his way to Cairo.

In Cairo, however, the troubles of our traveller were far from being ended. He deposited his goods in the Dar al-Wakala, in the storehouse of the Trustee of the Merchants, who also took care of the selling of a part of these goods. All this was, of course, a routine procedure. Unfortunately for Lebdi, however, the Trustee was also his customer, and he was not pleased at all with the way in which Lebdi had handled the business entrusted to him on his journey to India. Therefore, the Trustee withheld the proceeds of the sale, and the two became engaged in a long lawsuit. Even before the action began, Lebdi had paid over to his opponent 200 dinars — 100 in cash and 100 in kind (lac); however, while he regarded this payment as a settlement of the Trustee's claims, the latter was not satisfied with this sum at all. Things became further complicated, as they had done business also in Egypt (in indigo); and there also were complications in the lawsuit between Lebdi and the two representatives of the Tunisian Dayyan. As stated above, the complete proceedings, as well as Lebdi's correspondence with the Trustee of the Merchants of Aden in this matter, have been preserved.

Despite their length, the proceedings nowhere indicate the character of the contract concluded between the Trustee and Lebdi, before the latter set out on his long journey. I have even the impression that, despite the comparatively great sums involved, no written contract was drawn up at all;²³ otherwise one would assume that such a contract would have been produced in court. Obviously the reason for this deficiency was that such contracts were quite stereotype, as we are indeed in a position to judge from those of other people actually found in the Geniza. In these, the India trader undertakes to restore the capital of his "partner" in full, plus two thirds of the profit accrued, while one third remained for the trader. The latter had not to account for shipwreck and other acts of God, but

²³ No doubt Lebdi handed over to Yekuthiel a *tadhkira*, or statement, specifying the goods received and their value in local money. One has the impression that it was this *tadhkira* that was submitted to the court.

had to prove that he had handled the money or the merchandise entrusted to him with the same care as his own.²⁴ In Lebdi's case the legal problem was created by the fact that he did not execute Yekuthiel's order according to instructions. Although he could argue that he intended to serve his partner's interests best, it could be said against him, that by acting according to his own judgment, he ceased to be Yekuthiel's mandatory, but was doing business at his own risk, wherefore he was to be held liable for the goods perished in shipwreck on his way back from India. In addition, Yekuthiel could claim that he was not satisfied with the prices obtained in sellings made contrary to his instructions. These, however, are only the general outlines of the case. There were many other points of disagreement, including questions of bookkeeping, which are also of interest for the history of the technique of commerce, but fall outside the scope of this article.

After almost a year, the two lawsuits were ended, as usual, by agreements,²⁵ which, incidentally, involved action by the Jewish courts of "Aden and India" and of Tunisia. It appears from these agreements, that a full year after Lebdi's return the goods due to him from Aden had not yet arrived in Cairo. This shows that the India merchants of those days must have had good nerves, as well as capital enough to endure such delays.

From what has been said so far it might appear that business in those days was largely conducted on denominational lines. This impression, to my mind, is not in full accord with the facts; however, an adequate treatment of the subject would require considerable space. Some main considerations may be outlined here.

It is true that ancient Muslim law discriminated heavily against Christian and Jewish merchants. At the head of the Muslim conquerers stood the mercantile aristocracy of Mecca, which, in order to acquire commercial supremacy, in addition to political and social ascendancy, tried to kill off the non-Muslim business. It is also possible that in this respect, as in many others, the Muslims simply

²⁴ So far, I have found five such documents, mostly in a fragmentary state. In one this contract is called loosely *shirka* (partnership). Another gives its proper legal term: *mudaraba*, which, in the usage of the Hanafi School of Muslim Law, is the equivalent of *qirad* or *muqarada* in the Maliki School, defined by David Santillana (*Istituzioni di diritto musulmano malichita*, II, 787) as "associazione tra capitale e lavoro applicata al commercio, ossia commenda o accomenda." Concerning *mudaraba* see Santillana, p. 740. The *mudaraba* has its antecedents in Jewish law. In its turn, the *mudaraba* influenced, according to R. S. Lopez (*The Cambridge Economic History*, II, 267), the development of the commenda contract, which, in Italy, remained for centuries the most common form of partnership for overseas undertakings (cf. Lopez, *op. cit.*, p. 323). To be sure, Jewish law may reflect Mediterranean provincial usage in later Roman times.

²⁵ Both Muslim and Jewish judges refrain as far as possible from giving judgment. Inasmuch as theirs is a divinely revealed law, they are afraid of incurring eternal punishment by falsely interpreting it. Therefore, compromises are preferred, even if this involves, as in our case, very prolonged dealings. In Morocco, where Rabbinical law is still in force, according to the official statistics the majority of cases coming before the Jewish courts end by compromise, cf. A. Chouraqui, *La condition juridique de l'israélite marocain* (1951), p. 126. As a matter of fact, in the sixteenth-century Jewish law-code *Shulhan Arukh* (Part 4, section "Judges," chapter 12, par. 20) the judges are advised to avoid as far as possible giving decisions according to the written religious law.

took over discriminatory provisions of the Byzantine law against Jews. Be that as it may, the oldest existent Muslim lawbooks,²⁶ contain the provision that, while a Muslim merchant had to pay two and one half percent of the value of his merchandise at any customs station, a non-Muslim had to pay five percent, and the minimum value of a consignment, on which duties had to be paid, was forty dinars for a Muslim and twenty for an unbeliever. But I have the definite impression that this law was not enforced in Fatimid times, and it may even be that it was not included in the Isma'ili code of law, which was paramount in the Fatimid empire.²⁷ The Ayyubids, who were the champions of orthodox Islam, again enforced the old discriminatory laws. To be sure, I have found in the Geniza an enthusiastic letter from Alexandria, in which the writer describes an edict by Saladin to the effect that henceforth Christians and Jews had to pay only one half of the customs duties. This, however, can mean only that among the many other ancient discriminatory laws, which the very orthodox Saladin renewed, there was also this law about the customs, but when it became apparent that it did not work — for instance, that the merchants from Christian countries refused to trade with Saladin's empire — he repealed the law, and henceforth Christians and Jews (both foreign and local, as the edict quoted expressly states) had to pay only one half of the duties, i.e., the same as the Muslims.

In addition to discrimination, however, practical considerations, as well as the very character of the then Muslim state, effected a certain denominational trend in commerce. Daily prayer with a community of at least ten male adults is a duty normally incumbent on any Jew, and there were, of course, the dietary laws and the Sabbath. Muslims, Hindus, and Oriental Christians — no European Christians are mentioned in these papers — had to meet similar requirements. Therefore, it was understandable that several members of one community travelled together²⁸ — as reports about losses through shipwreck show. The Muslim state of the time protected the life and the property of its subjects, but, as a rule, it did not extend to them social assistance — which was left to private initiative and to the religious communities. Thus, the petty rulers all along the sea route to India would seize the goods of a merchant, as soon as they learned that

²⁶ Abu Yusuf's *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p. 79, French translation by E. Fagnan (Pavis, 1921), p. 205, and Shafi'i's, *Kitab al-Umm*, vii, 228. See further A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, iii, 9–10. Grohmann quotes W. Heffening, *Beiträge zum Rechts- und wirtschaftsleben des islamischen Orients*, I, which is at present not available to me. It is worth while to note that the Christian Arab tribe Taghlib had to pay as taxes for its lands twice the amount which Muslims used to pay; see Abu Yusuf in Fagnan's translation, p. 185.

²⁷ It is possible that the flourishing state of commerce under the Fatimids and the ascendancy of Cairo over Baghdad in their days had something to do with the more liberal attitude of the ruling sect towards the non-Muslim population.

²⁸ Reference is made here to travelling together in big groups of ten or more, which may have had its reason in the circumstances described above. However, it seems that nobody ever travelled alone. The India merchants seem to have had the fixed habit of travelling in the company of another, styled *rafik* (companion), and the same was the case with regard to Mediterranean seafaring. Many data about this habit are to be found in our papers. In a report about shipwreck it was sufficient to announce that Mr X. and his *rafik*, Mr Y and his *rafik*, etc., perished, and everybody knew who was meant.

he perished in the sea. It was the Trustee of the Merchants or, depending on circumstances, another courageous merchant, who would then, at great risk, save the dead man's estate for the widow and the orphans, who often lived in a distant country. The latter would then, at the local religious court, give power of attorney to the Trustee or to another merchant concerned to act on their behalf, e.g., sell the goods of the deceased or, the other way around, buy merchandise with the money deposited with them, and send it home to the family. All matters of marriage, divorce, alimonies, and usually of inheritance were handled by the religious courts — a fact which also was not without influence on business.

Finally, as a rule, the various communities lived in separate quarters — a heritage from the ancient times, at least from the Hellenistic town. As much small fry participated in the Indian trade, it was convenient to arrange things in such a way that the proceeds could be easily distributed. In a very instructive letter from 'Aidhab, the North African port, a man writes to his son that of a shipment of pepper, brazilwood (*bakkam*, a dyeing plant), lac, and gold dinars, which had arrived (it is not stated whether it came from Aden or from India direct), and which obviously had been a joint undertaking — for the letter presupposes that the recipient knew all about it beforehand — the Muslims took the pepper and the brazilwood and the Jews took the lac and the gold. The reason for this arrangement is obvious: one commodity would go to the Jewish Trustee of the Merchants (named in the letter), who would sell it and distribute the money made among the participants in the deal in the Jewish quarter of Old Cairo, while the recipient of the letter would distribute the rest of the proceedings in Alexandria; the other commodities would go to the Muslim quarter. Thus, the denominational bias in the Indian trade, as far as it existed, had its source in practical considerations.

On the other hand, these India papers again and again reveal an interdenominational and international outlook. Madmun, the prince of the Jewish merchants in Aden, had among his business friends a Christian, 'Abd al-Masih, "The Servant of Christ" — the Syrian Christian community of India was old and of great importance — and, of course, many Muslims. Persons bearing Hindu names also are described by him as his brothers and friends. Even *kadis* did regularly business with and for Jews.

The dividing line which separated the society of those days into different camps was not formed so much by religion or nationality, as by the antagonism between the ruling soldieries and the industrious businessmen. Therefore, the Geniza papers dealing with the Far Eastern trade, although having naturally some bearing on Jewish history, are to be valued mainly as a rich source for the knowledge of the mediaeval commerce with India and the adjacent countries, in general.



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THE UNITY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD IN THE "MIDDLE" MIDDLE AGES *

I

An Arabist reading Jérôme Carcopino's classic *Daily Life in Rome* is overwhelmed by the many striking parallels, often pointed out by the author himself, between the life described in that book and that familiar from Mediterranean Muslim towns, which have preserved their mediaeval character. Carcopino gives us a picture of imperial Rome, the capital of the pagan world, about 900 years before Islamic civilization reached its apogee, and still there is much in common between the two.

This continuity of the Mediterranean heritage has been brought into full relief by the recent studies of Professor Claude Cahen on the development of the Islamic and Western towns. Until then, it was generally believed that the European town was somehow a continuation of the Graeco-Roman polis, whilst in Islam a town in the sense of a self-contained, organized community never existed. On the whole, the latter assumption is correct, but in the West, too, there was little of autonomous city life in later Roman times, whilst in early Islam various organizations enjoying local autonomy, such as the *Aḥdāth*, "the young men," a kind of local militia, were active and recognized by the authorities⁽¹⁾. The final differentiation

* Papers read at the meetings of the American Oriental Society at Ann Arbor, April 1959, and New Haven, April 1960.

(1) Cf. Claude Cahen, « Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen Age », *Arabica, Revue d'Études Arabes*, tomes V et VI, 1958-1959. Tome VI, p. 260 quotes Geniza documents showing that around 1050, the *Aḥdāth* were a fixed institution even in a little town such as Jerusalem.

between East and West came about during the twelfth century, when new and specific historical forces were at work in Europe and when power was completely taken over by barbarian soldier slaves in almost all of the Muslim states.

However, during the "middle" Middle Ages, say around 1050, the date just mentioned, the unity of the Mediterranean world was still a fact. This is all the more remarkable, since the European shore of the Mediterranean, including Spain, as well as the African and Asian sides, were split up into many separate political units, often at war with one another. However, despite the many frontiers and the frequent wars, people and goods, books and ideas travelled freely from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. As far as the Islamic side is concerned, we can deduce this fact from literary sources, such as the biographies of scholars, or, in particular, from some of the excellent books of travel which were written around that time. Even more impressive is the documentary evidence to be derived from the letters and deeds preserved in the so-called Cairo Geniza. For here we have records of life as it really was, especially of the middle and lower strata of society, uncensored by literary selection and presentation ⁽¹⁾.

To be sure, the writers of the letters and deeds found in the Cairo Geniza were mostly Jews. However, at least eighty per cent of the documents preserved were written not in Hebrew, but in Arabic, the lingua franca of the time; Muslims and Christians are frequently mentioned in them, and one does not get the impression from them that the Jews at that time moved about more than the members of other communities. In any case, the enormous degree of freedom of communication, enjoyed by the people mirrored in the Cairo Geniza, would not have been possible had it not been favored by the legal position and the general political climate in the states concerned.

The first and most eloquent testimony of this freedom of

(1) Cf. the present writer's "The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Muslim Civilisation", *Studia Islamica*, 1955, 75-91, where further bibliographical details are given. An article called "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History" is scheduled to appear in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 79.

movement is the silence about its absence in the thousands of fragmentary or complete business and family letters preserved. A person would refer to his travel to Palermo, Genova, Marseille, or any place in Spain, North Africa, Egypt, or the Syrian coast, or even to places in Byzantine Greece, such as Salonika or Thebes; or he would write a letter in Arabic from Seleucia, today Selefke, in Asia Minor to Cairo, mentioning his journey through Jaffa, Rhodes, Chios, and Constantinople, without ever alluding to any difficulties incurred because of political boundaries. Merchants would commute freely every summer between Fatimid, Shi'ite, Egypt and Zirid, orthodox, Tunisia even at the time of great tension between the two countries, or would travel on the direct route between Alexandria and Seville or Almeria in Spain. To be sure, everyone had to carry a *barā'a*, which is not a passport, but a certificate to the effect that he had paid his taxes. Without such a *barā'a*, one could not travel at all, even inside Egypt. We frequently read in the Geniza papers that persons carried these certificates or forgot them at home ⁽¹⁾, or we read about persons taken off a Nile barge, while travelling from one village to another without carrying a *wuṣūl al-jāliya*, or receipt for the poll tax paid. When the Spanish Hebrew poet, Judah ha-Levi, on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land made a rather prolonged stop at Cairo, his friend and agent in Alexandria had to make arrangements with the authorities for his poll tax certificate. This we know from a highly interesting letter addressed to him from Alexandria, where, at that time, his poems were collected and published.

However, these measures of precaution taken by the fiscal authorities cannot be called an infringement on the freedom of movement. Only in later times, under Saladin's rule, e.g. in a letter sent from Alexandria to Aden, a man expresses his apprehension that the *nāẓir*, or suzperintendent, of the port would not let him travel because he regarded him as suspicious

(1) "Please search in the pocket of my dove-colored robe", writes a merchant after his arrival in Cairo from Alexandria, "you will find my *barā'a* there; please send it immediately, for I have already deposited bail bond for it".

for the mere reason that he had arrived on a Frankish boat. However, as is well-known, the famous Spanish Muslim geographer, Ibn Jubair, travelled as late as 1183 from Acre to Sicily, and from there to Spain on Christian ships; and in the Geniza it is absolutely commonplace for Jews from Muslim countries to travel on boats belonging to citizens of non-Muslim states, such as Normans, Byzantines, Genoese, or Pisans. A man could write from Spain to his wife in Cairo: "I intend to come on the Gaetani, i. e. the ship belonging to the merchant from Gaeta" (in Italy), just as we would say today: "This summer, I shall be travelling on a Dutch boat."

In practice, freedom of movement was very much disturbed by piracy and warfare, and there are many references to both in the Geniza papers. The more astonishing are the casual remarks of these people about travel to distant countries and long journeys. Just a few examples: First, a hasty note, sent by a merchant from Alexandria to Cairo; he wrote it on Friday afternoon, i.e. on the Eve of Sabbath, remarking, "I have already taken my bath" — meaning, of course, that no business was normally done at such a time. What do we read in this note? "I have just arrived from Almeria, Spain. Your business friend in Fez, Morocco, sent me a bar of gold — certainly from the Sudan — to buy with it Spanish silk for you. I, however, thought this was not a good idea, and am forwarding you the gold, as it is. On the other hand, a friend of your business friend there delivered such and such a quantity of ambergris ⁽¹⁾ to me, which I forward herewith, and asks you to send back five flasks of musk for what you get for it; please sell the ambergris on the arrival of this letter and buy the musk, for I have to send it off immediately."

Or we read in a letter of recommendation by Solomon b. Judah, the Gaon, or Head of the Jewish Academy in Jerusalem until his death in 1051: "The bearer of this letter is a Jew from Khorasan, highly recommended to me by my friends in Seville; he is now proceeding to Cairo; please look after him." We

(1) Ambergris is a perfume made from a waxy substance, secreted by whales, and therefore comes here from the West.

do not know how this Jew from Northeastern Iran came to Spain. It is likely that he came back to Jerusalem on the Northern route, via Sicily and Tyre or Acre. The Gaon, who was the spiritual head of Western Jewry, had, owing to the institution of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, close, personal connections with peoples from all over the Mediterranean world. Still, the short, business-like way, in which the widely travelled Khorasani is introduced here shows how small the world had already become at that time.

Another impressive illustration of the unity of the Mediterranean world in the "middle" Middle Ages is the frequency of intermarriage between persons from different countries. We have a great deal of material about this question in the Geniza. Not only did the families leading in business, scholarship, and communal life (say, in Spain, Tunisia, and Egypt) intermarry, but the same was true for the lower ranks of society. Even slaves, doing business for their masters in different countries, contracted such unions. There seems to have been some system in the matter. In a document from Tyre on the Lebanese coast, a girl gives power-of-attorney to a gentleman to select a husband for her in Cairo and to arrange a marriage contract with him in her name. Nor was this confined to Muslim countries. We have a letter, written in beautiful Hebrew, by a lady from Egypt whose brothers still lived there. She had been married in Europe and her daughter already bore a Greek name, spelled Zoi.

However, the most significant aspect of the age by far was the fact that political boundaries did not interfere with the unity and autonomy of religious or ethnic groups. Regular contributions were made by the Jewish communities all over the Fatimid empire for the benefit of the two great Jewish academies in Abbasid Bagdad; likewise, yearly collections were held in the communities of the Sunni West for the academy in Jerusalem which was under the rule of a Shi'ite dynasty; similarly, donations were sent to Bagdad and Jerusalem from Christian countries, e.g. from Lucca in Northern Italy, from Narbonne or Montpellier in France and even Mayence in Germany. All these communities submitted their questions

to those seats of learning, and over a thousand replies ⁽¹⁾ have been preserved. Compared with the many barriers to free communication disgracing our century, these facts are really impressive.

There was even more to it. Unbelievable as it may appear, documentary evidence shows that the official head of the Jewish community in Fatimid Egypt, who was confirmed in his office by the Fatimid caliph, was installed by the Jewish exilarch who had his seat in Bagdad. Likewise, Jewish judges and other dignitaries, whether in Egypt, or somewhere in Tunisia or Morocco, were approved by the heads of the academies in Jerusalem or Bagdad. Similar relationships must have existed between the other Christian communities and that of Zirid Tunisia, which was of considerable size.

How is all this to be explained? Of course, the machinery of the state was still relatively loose in those days, i. e. the technique of making life unbearable was not yet as perfected as it is in our own time. In addition to this, however, there were three positive factors, all interconnected, one legal, one socio-economic, and one historical, which worked in favour of the freedom of movement and the unity of the Mediterranean world: (a) the conception that law was personal and not territorial, i.e. an individual was judged according to the law of his community, or even his sect, rather than that of the territory in which he happened to be; (b) the consequences of the bourgeois revolution of the eighth and ninth centuries, which still dominated the "middle" Middle Ages. A mercantile civilization was alive around the Mediterranean with merchants as its most conspicuous bearers; and business makes for free movement ⁽²⁾; (c) finally — and here we come back to the beginning of this paper — all these countries had a great and long-standing tradition in common. The fact that most of them had once been united within the confines of the Roman empire is perhaps of secondary importance. It is the cultural

(1) These Jewish *Responsa* correspond to the *Fatwas* of the Muslim scholars.

(2) Cf. S. D. GOITEIN, "The Rise of Near Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times", *Journal of World History*, III, 1957.

tradition, which begins with Sumer and Akkad, and even with Iran — for these countries belong to the Mediterranean world — which counts. The unity of the Mediterranean world was disrupted only when the Islamic countries were taken over by barbarians from outside, mostly from Central Asia and the Caucasus, who had no share in that tradition.

II

The unity of the Mediterranean world during the “middle” Middle Ages was achieved through the great extent of seafaring carried on in that “tideless midland sea”. The records of the Cairo Geniza contain abundant material about the subject. So far, sixteen types of ships and details for over one hundred and ten individual boats, as well as thirty-six kinds of containers for the transport of goods and about one hundred and fifty classes of commodities carried by ships have been noted. The ownership and management of ships, the seasons of sailing, numbers of passengers, routes taken, duration of passages, reports about the movements of ships, jettisoning, shipwrecking, piracy and ransoming, and many other related subjects are illustrated by the Geniza records. To be sure, the numbers given above refer solely to the Mediterranean basin. The equally rich Geniza material about the Indian ocean will be treated separately.

In the following pages, a number of special problems connected with Mediterranean sea and river traffic are presented in the hope that some of the readers of this journal might be able to contribute to their solution.

1. Whenever feasible, people travelled by water and not on land. To quote an extreme case: Around 1140, an Italian Jew, on business in Tripoli, Libya, wanted to travel to Gabes in nearby Tunisia. He was advised by his friends to board a large ship, which was sailing to Seville, Spain and which, with a good wind, would make the passage in eight days, without touching land. Then he was to transfer to another large boat to al-Mahdiyya, the main seaport of Tunisia, and to try to

reach his destination from there. This is, of course, quite an exceptional route, but conditions at that time cannot have been too insecure, for in the end the man actually travelled by land. In general, I estimate the ratio between references to overland travel and references to seafaring in the Geniza, wherever such an alternative existed, as being 1:50.

This statement has to be qualified by two considerations:

a) A disproportionally large number of Geniza papers come from the second half of the eleventh century, when overland communications might have been disrupted, owing to the invasion of North Africa by the bedouin hordes of the Banu Hilal and Sulaim. In fact, Geniza references to caravan traffic are more frequent in the first half of that century than in any subsequent period. Still, even at that time, I should estimate the ratio between seafaring and travel on land as 20:1.

b) Most of the Geniza letters were written by Jews, and Jews did not travel on Saturdays and holidays. A Jew travelling in a caravan, which was en route for more than six days, either stayed behind or hurried ahead of the caravan for celebrating his Sabbath—both cases are mentioned in our records. This, of course, required a special escort and was both expensive and dangerous. If the traveller was rich and particularly influential, he could induce the whole caravan to make a stop on the Sabbath, which is also attested in a Geniza paper. It may be mentioned in passing that these conditions remained unchanged down to the nineteenth century. The renowned Orientalist, Professor A. S. Yahuda (who died in New Haven, Connecticut, only a few years ago) recounts in his collected essays that his grandfather, when emigrating from Bagdad to Jerusalem in 1852, stipulated that the caravan with which he was travelling, should rest each Saturday, which cost him a huge sum of money. It was due to these circumstances that consignments were confided by Jews to Muslim business friends or pilgrims bound to Mecca, or that we find remarks like the following in letters: "If there be a caravan and if trustworthy Muslims travel in it, kindly send the goods with them." However, such remarks are not very common.

As a rule, people travelled by sea, wherever such an alternative existed, even for such a short distance, as Acre-Ramle (via Jaffa), Palestine, or Tyre—Tripoli, Lebanon.

Although conditions varied widely, sometimes even during one and the same year, it seems—although this is by no means sure—that discomfort, expenses, and lack of security were greater in travel by land than on sea. Still, there might have been other reasons for this discrepancy between the two methods of transport, and the present writer will be grateful for elucidations.

2. Caravan traffic and seafaring were closely coordinated. In winter, when the sea was closed, up to three caravans passed from Sijilmāsa, the great desert port of Morocco—which meanwhile has disappeared entirely—through Qairawān, Tripoli and Barqa to Egypt. In summer, too, caravan traffic had to fill a gap in seafaring. The ships normally sailed in convoys leaving in the spring and setting sail for the return journey at the Feast of the Cross, the *'Īd aṣ-Ṣalīb*, which is celebrated on September 26 or 27. Another convoy departed in the Coptic month of Baoone, which begins on June 7. In between, at the end of May, the summer caravans set out, which needed about three months for the distance between Egypt and Tunisia, since business was done at the intermediary stations. In one letter, referring to Qairawān, it is stated that the fair connected with the arrival of the caravan lasted twenty days. These large distance caravans were called *mausim*, the same word, which, in the Indian Ocean, designated the seasonal winds, and which, in the form *monsoon*, has entered the English language in the latter meaning. The present writer will be grateful for any information about these caravan *mausims* and their relationship to seafaring provided from literary sources.

3. He has a similar request for another most important complement to seafaring: the overland mail. Passengers and goods went by sea, mail was largely sent by land. In literary sources we hear much about the *barīd*, the mail service maintained by the Muslim governments, just as was the case in mediaeval China and in the Byzantine empire. However, this

service was reserved for the exclusive use of the government and its officials and functioned largely as a means of supervision of the local administration. In the Geniza papers, however, we hear much about another, commercially run, private postal service, which was of utmost importance for the population at large. It was operated by couriers, called *faij* ("runner")—a Persian word—all over North Africa, and *kutubī* ("bearer of letters") in Western Asia. In one characteristic aspect, this private service followed the practice of the government post. Whilst this last institution maintained numerous relay stations, where the riding animals were changed, one and the same messenger carried the dispatches confided to him from the starting point to the final destination. The same was done by the private couriers. One and the same man would transmit the mail from Qairawān all the way to Cairo, or even from Almeria, Spain, through the whole of North Africa, to Alexandria. This service was comparatively inexpensive. A letter sent from Almeria to Alexandria cost only one and a half silver dirhams, four letters having been dispatched to the same address, while an urgent, special-delivery letter from Jerusalem to Ramle cost half a dirham. Almost invariably, in letters sent to another country by overland mail, reference is made to goods and business friends going at the same time by boat.

4. In the Middle Ages, owing to the comparatively small size of vessels, no strict distinction was made between seagoing craft and rivercraft. It is therefore not surprising that we occasionally find in the Geniza boats coming from the sea and continuing their way on inland waters or vice versa. Thus we read, e.g., about the ships of a rich Muslim judge from Tyre, Lebanon, which went, via Damietta and the eastern arm of the Nile, to Old Cairo and from there, via the western arm of the Nile and Alexandria, to Tunisia. However, the overwhelming testimony of the Geniza records proves that, as a rule, passengers and consignments left the seagoing vessels in the Mediterranean ports and continued their way inland by other means of transport, but mainly on the Nile. The reason for this might have been that owing to the continual changes which took place in

the configuration of the bottom of the Nile, navigation on it was dangerous—we read indeed about many shipwrecks on the Nile—and therefore special skill was required, which the ordinary Mediterranean sailor did not possess. A number of special types of craft were used on the Nile: the '*ushāri*, the river boat; the *jarm*, the barge; the *sumairiyya*, a type imported from Iraq (A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Heidelberg 1922, p. 457, calls it «Sumererschiff»); and a longish, swift boat, called *khīṭī*, for which, under the form *khīṭiyya*, I have found several references for Iraq in earlier Islamic times, but none for Egypt and for the time under discussion, the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

5. As for navigation on the high sea, ships usually sailed in convoys, which in times of danger were accompanied by warships. We read indeed that often the merchantmen were ready for sailing and waited only for the men-of-war to join them. Normally, a larger ship was accompanied by a smaller vessel, belonging to the same proprietor or to one of his relatives or friends. Obviously, under certain conditions of a rough sea, a smaller craft had more chances of survival than a larger one, especially when the latter had lost its sails and rudder, which is reported to have happened. In one case, we read in a Hebrew letter that the «maidservant» boat—as it was called—picked up the survivors from the main ship. So far no reference has been found in the Geniza records to lifeboats carried on board, and I am inclined to believe that they were not in use at that time.

6. Of the special types of seagoing craft mentioned in the Geniza records, the most common was a large sailing ship called *qunbār*, which word, so far, I have not found either in an Arabic dictionary or in Muslim literature. However, the Byzantine Emperor, Leon the Wise (886-912), says in his book on the art of war that the Greek equivalent of *qunbār*, *kombarion*, was borrowed from the Saracens, and his son, the Emperor Constantine VII, describes it as a particularly large ship. The Venetians, too, used this type of vessel in the tenth century, calling it *gombaria*. However, while the Greeks and Italians

refer to the *qunbār* as a man-of-war, the Geniza—to be sure, a century later—knows it only as a ship used for the transport of heavy cargo and passengers.

7. In addition to sailing ships, light galleys, *ghurāb*, propelled solely, or mainly, by oars, were used for travel and transport. The galley had both tactical and nautical advantages over the sailing ship: as it could be turned with ease, it had better prospects of escape from attacks by the ubiquitous pirates, and it was, of course, less exposed to the caprice of the wind. Still, the galley as merchantman is comparatively rare in our records. Seafaring, even along the coasts, appears to have been entirely dependent on the winds. To give just one example: A letter from Alexandria complains that during thirty-three days, with the exception of one large Spanish boat, no ship had arrived, for the winds were neither east nor west winds. In addition, only twenty-three days were left until the *ʿId al-Ṣalīb*, the term for the return journey, so that practically no time was left for business. I wonder whether the economic ascendancy of the Italians over the Arabs was not due partly to the fact that the former built large-sized, oar-propelled galleys for mercantile shipping.

8. Another common type of Mediterranean bottom was the *khinzīra* (not *khinzīr*, which means pig and was used in Syria also as the name of a fish). The word designated in the language of the period a hub or nave of a wheel, which is a rather strange name for a type of vessel. With this, however, the nickname of a ship, *duwwāma* («whipping-top»), might perhaps be compared. The *khinzīra* is attested for Sicily, Tunisia, Tripoli, and Egypt, and a Tunisian *khinzīra* is once mentioned as sailing on the Nile.

The word *shakhtūr* or *shakhtūra* is used until the present day for a coastal craft and is also rather common in the Geniza records. Once, around 1130, we read that such a skiff made the journey from Alexandria to Almeria, Spain, in sixty-five days, but still went faster than two Spanish sailing boats, which were about to set sail when it left the harbor of Alexandria. *Shakhtūrs* are mentioned in particular on the route between Tunisia, Tripoli, and Egypt.

Hajm, normally designating a large drinking bowl, was the name of a type of ship en route between Sicily and Egypt—a name appropriate for a ship with a round hull. Another type, used on the same route, was called *qarrāba*, meaning box, chest. Perhaps it was similar to the East Roman *dromon*, which « was a blunt ship with angular, rather than smoothly flowing lines » (cf. Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners*, New York 1959, p. 243, and the photograph of the model made by R. H. Dolley of the British Museum, *ib.*, opposite p. 219).

For one type of ships, spelled *sh'-k-h*, the present writer is unable to provide even the correct pronunciation. It could be *shāka* or *shākha* (and, of course, also *shākka*, etc.), for the Hebrew letter *k* stands for both Arabic *k* and *kh*.

As Spanish Hebrew poets of that period, when describing sea voyages, refer to both sails and oars—although their ships were dependent mainly on the winds, it might be assumed that some of the unidentified types of boats appearing in our records were, like the Italian *tarida*, a cross between sailing ship and galley.

9. On various occasions, the Geniza records speak of warships and naval war. Here, too, I would like to single out a detail, for which I should appreciate a parallel from literary sources, namely, the tactical combination of one heavy warship, called *uṣṭūl*, which operated together with light galleys, called *qaṭā'ī*, literally « pieces ». The words *uṣṭūl*, which is, of course, the Greek *stolos* (« fleet »), but designates in the Arabic of that period one heavy warship, as well as *qaṭā'ī* in the sense just described, are known from other sources. However, I have not read about their maneuvering together, outside of the Geniza, which mentions this more than once. The term *qaṭā'ī*, or rather *aqlā'*, was used also for boats employed on the arduous trip from Cairo upstream to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt, from where they returned after a stay of only two days. Likewise, the word *ghurāb*, which we have met already as designating the galley used as a merchantman, was applied also to men-of-war. On the other hand, *shīnī*, which, according to Ibn Mammāti, *Qawānīn al-Dawānīn*, p. 240, is a synonym of *ghurāb*,

is reserved in the Geniza exclusively for warships, and *aṣḥāb al-shawānī* is a general term for pirates.

10. Finally, the greatest puzzle of Mediterranean shipping, as reflected in the Geniza papers, is its organization. While most of the international trade was based on a widely ramified system of partnerships, destined to minimize the risk of oversea undertakings, a ship was normally owned by one single proprietor. There is nothing in the Geniza comparable to the provisions for joint ownership in boats so prominent in mediaeval European sea-contracts, nor to the *loca* or shares in a boat, which dominated Genoese shipping at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. The situation was rather similar to that prevailing in Genoa at the end of the thirteenth century, when the accumulation of great wealth and power in the hand of the leading families made it possible to dispense with the system of shares. Still, that contrast between the methods generally in use in overseas trade and that regarding the ownership of ships calls for comment.

There is an additional problem in connection with the proprietorship of seagoing vessels—the almost complete absence of local Christians. No reference is made here, of course, to the ships of European Christians, those of Marseilles, Genoa, Pisa, Gaeta, and Norman Sicily, which appear in the Geniza papers of the twelfth century. Of local Christians who bear Arabic names, so far, only two have been found who are explicitly mentioned as ship-owners, and one or two other names of ship-owners, such as al-Iskandar, might have been borne by Christians. It seems that 400 years of naval warfare between Islam and Byzantium had an adverse influence on local Christian shipping.

The present writer is preparing a book on *Mediterranean Society in Mediaeval Times, Based on Records from the Cairo Geniza*, which will contain a chapter on travel and transport. Information elucidating any of the points raised in this paper or the subject in general will be highly welcome.

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BETWEEN HELLENISM AND RENAISSANCE—ISLAM, THE INTERMEDIATE CIVILIZATION

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BETWEEN HELLENISM AND RENAISSANCE— ISLAM, THE INTERMEDIATE CIVILIZATION

S. D. GOITEIN

Continuity and oneness are the very essence of religiosity. For the pious and unsophisticated Muslim, the thirteen and a half centuries which have passed since the inception of his religion are but a great yesterday which merges smoothly with his own life and religious experience. For him there is no question of development or of different levels of validity. The great drama of Islam unfolds before him on one single stage, on which he himself is a performer, albeit a modest one, while the Prophet and the other heroes of Islam are so near to his mind, as if they had lived in his own time and had been seen by him with his own eyes.

Religious thought and theology take a different attitude. The life of the Prophet himself was carefully periodicized by the Muslim scholars, because, according to their legal theory, certain laws promulgated during the earlier stages of his career as Messenger of God were abrogated by those relevant to the same subject-matter but decreed later. Therefore, the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the historical circumstances accompanying the revelation of the various parts of the Qur'ān, sometimes even of a single verse, formed the object of serious study, the results of which have been often confirmed by modern research. The oral traditions concerning the Prophet were subjected to severe scrutiny, developing into a full-scale science, and one of the most important concepts of Muslim theology, *bid'ah*, or unwarranted innovation, is based on the notion of development, on the idea that an originally pure core of religion was contaminated by later accretions. The very theory of Muslim law is based on a historical concept, on periodization of Islamic history, namely on the assumption that only during the first three centuries of Islam or so, the great teachers were competent to interpret authoritatively the Book of God and the Traditions of His Prophet, while, since "the closing of the gate of authoritative decisions" it was left to the religious scholars only to adapt the findings of the ancient masters to the exigencies of

their own time. Thus we see that the scholars of Islam viewed their faith in the light of historical development, a mental attitude which found a magnificent expression in the great Islamic historiography.

The modern historian still has to go one step further. While he reverently appreciates the spiritual forces which make for continuity and oneness in the concept of Islam, while he tries to understand the motives and methods of the Muslim scholars of the past, his business is to write history, i.e. to describe and to try to explain changes. In this respect, the present writer believes, the Islamists of our time have not yet done enough. By using loosely, the term Islamic Civilization, comprising in it everything which happened in the countries of Islam from the first revelations of the Prophet down to the constitution of Pakistan or the new Arab socialism, they have done a disservice both to the religion of Islam and to the history of the Islamic peoples. Such generalizations obscure the nature of religion and deprive the term civilization of any real content. No one would dream of characterizing the development of Italy from the arrival in Rome of the apostle Paul down to the activities of the Italian political parties calling themselves Christian as "Christian Civilization". There is no doubt some connection between the apostolate of Paul and the existence of political parties in Italy styled as Christian. But many other important forces have moulded the destinies of Italy, and consequently, its history has been broken up into periods, characterized by those forces and confided to specialists studying them. Similarly, we have to periodicize the long history of Islam in order to arrive at a clear concept of cultural entities, each possessing a social framework of its own and characterized by a coherent set of values, shared only in part with other periods.

In this paper, we are dealing with the Islamic world as it was approximately between 850 and 1250 A. C. For reasons explained on p. 222 we have described it as the *Intermediate Civilization*. Note *Intermediate*, not *Intermediary*, for that civilization created works of the spirit of its own and was not a mere transmitter of ancient heritage. That period is characterized by the predominance of the middle class, which thrived on a free enterprise economy, and by the all-pervading influence of Greek science in both matter and spirit.

This Intermediate Civilization, which for the first time in the

world history made lasting physical contacts with all contemporary cultures, created also a new science : Comparative Religion. There certainly exists some relationship between that branch of study and the vast Greek literature on ethnology, of which only a fraction has survived. Also, it may well be that its actual beginnings are to be sought in the Mesopotamian city of Harrān (now in Turkey), the last refuge of syncretistic paganism. However, it was the spirit of scientific curiosity and objectivity, combined with a deep-seated interest in religion, both so characteristic of the Intermediate Civilization, which made the full development of this new science possible.

A late and geographically remote, but sincere and mighty heir to this tradition was Akbar, the greatest of the Moghul emperors of India (ruled 1556-1605). Although his study of comparative religion and the subsequent promulgation of a new faith comprising all existing denominations was largely motivated by political aims, namely the amalgamation of the heterogeneous elements of India's population, he was personally fascinated by the subject and, despite his illiteracy, well versed in it. However, he lived in a period of bigotry and fanaticism, and, after his death, his lifework was soon undone. The science of *Milal wa-Nihāl*, or comparative religion, as developed by the Intermediate civilization of Islam, is still awaiting a worthy heir.¹

Hellenism was to classical Greece what contemporary world civilization is to Western culture. In both cases, sciences and techniques, ideas and ways of life, developed by one people or by one group of peoples, were adopted, in varying degrees of intensity by many others. Therefore, the fate of Hellenism, its quality and duration, are of great concern to both those who are the sons of this Western culture and to the citizens of a civilization which more and more is encompassing the whole human race.

In order to avoid ambiguity, I would like to start with a definition. We normally apply the term Hellenism to the period between Alexander and Augustus, between the establishment of the Macedonian empire and the final replacement of its heirs by Rome. This is Hellenism as seen from Greece and from the point of view of political history. However, from the standpoint of cultural history and the peoples affected by the Greek heritage, we have to extend this period far longer, well down to the seventh century A.C., when the study of Greek finally had come to an end in

Latin Europe and when the countries of the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean were conquered by a new language and a new civilization, Arabic and Islam. What happened between the seventh century, the end of Hellenic studies in Western Europe, and the twelfth, the beginning of their revival?

As is well known, Hellenism found a refuge precisely in that civilization and that language which had replaced Greek and Greek culture in most countries which they had dominated for centuries. Countless works of Greek authors were translated into Arabic and formed the basis of a new and largely secular civilization inside Islam. The combined results of these efforts, namely the translations of Greek books, and the scientific creations based on them, were made available to Latin Europe, either through direct translations or through the intermediary of Hebrew or Spanish, and both contributed substantially to the so-called renaissance of the twelfth century.

The very first book in the English language to be printed in England was the translation of a collection of sayings by Greek philosophers, compiled by a Muslim gentleman and bibliophile in 1048-9. The book was translated from Arabic into Spanish, from Spanish into Latin, from Latin into French and finally from French into English. It was first printed in 1477.² However, we are concerned here not with the late, albeit fascinating, history of the translations from Arabic but with the translations into Arabic from Greek.

The relationship of Hellenism to the Roman and the Islamic civilizations presents a paradox. The Romans were so eager to learn the Greek language that there was no great incentive for translations into Latin. Even in the provincial towns of Gaul (present-day France), and as late as the fourth century A.C., boys learned Greek and memorized its classical authors. In particular there was no need to translate scientific works, for Greek was the language of science. Galen, the great physician of the second century A.C., loved and taught most of his life in Rome, but his books are written in Greek. The same could be said of many other prominent scholars of the Roman Hellenistic period. The ultimate result of all this was, however, that in later, barbarian times, with the loss of the knowledge of the Greek language in the West, the knowledge of the scientific literature was lost as well. The Muslim Arabs, on the other hand, never knew a word of

Greek and never made the slightest effort to learn the language, but Christian and pagan Syrians, as well as some Persians and Jews, did for them the work of translation so completely that the whole corpus of Hellenic sciences, still in existence at the time of the Muslim conquests, became available in Arabic.

Let me illustrate this by one example. The Nestorian Christian Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (John the son of Isaac), who died in 873 A.C. wrote a treatise in which he gave detailed information about no less than one hundred and twenty-nine works of Galen alone which he had translated into Arabic, partly also into Syriac. These translations did not remain a dead letter, but became handbooks used by the medical practitioners throughout the Middle Ages. I had the good luck to find in the treasures of the so-called Cairo Geniza an inventory of the library of a Jewish physician in Old Cairo, which was sold by auction in November 1190, i.e. three hundred years after Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's death. As Baneth's painstaking edition of the text shows, this library contained at least thirty-seven volumes of Galen's writings, of course in Arabic translation.³ Around 1190, we remember, the most prominent Jewish scholar in Old Cairo was Moses Maimonides, the great philosopher, who was also a renowned physician and medical writer. In medicine, Maimonides was entirely dependent on Galen. He took exception, however, to Galen's philosophical views and found it necessary to refute them in a special treatise, because he rightly assumed that Galen's overwhelming authority as physician would induce the students of his work to accept his philosophy as well.⁴ By that time, i.e. the end of the twelfth century, most of the Arabic translations of Galen had already been done into Latin, along with many of the original works of medical authors writing in Arabic, such as the famous North-African Jewish physician Isaac Israeli.

The broad outlines of this great historical process of the preservation of Greek thought through the medium of Arabic and its ultimate transmission to the Latin West is of course familiar to everyone. Many of its details, however, and particularly its evaluation still need much additional research and have formed the subject of longstanding controversies, not yet terminated. Three parties are involved here : the classical scholar, the Islamist and the medievalist. Classical philology's first interest in the matter is to know which Greek writings whose originals have been

lost, have come down to us in Arabic translations, abridgements and adaptations. Examples are the *Oikonomikos*, or a treatise on the management of the house, by the Neopythagorean Bryson, the *Book of the Plants*, an ancient Greek source, although not by Aristotle to whom it was ascribed, and in particular writings on mathematics, astronomy, mechanics and medicine but also a considerable number of treatises by later philosophical writers. Secondly, the Arabic translations and commentaries may be useful for the emendation and better understanding of classical texts whose originals we possess. A case in point is the discussion by Richard Walzer of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in the light of its Arabic translation.⁵ It stands to reason that quite a number of new developments will take place in this field in the near future. For long lost or altogether unknown Arabic manuscripts are making their appearance in our day all over the Middle East in libraries which had remained untapped or had not been sufficiently examined before.

In addition to these two practical interests of classical philology in the adoption and transmission of the Greek heritage by the Arabs, there is a third and broader, more philosophical concern. How far was this heritage still Greek? How far did Hellas succeed in bequeathing to the world of those days a scientific culture transcending the barriers of languages, nations and religions? These questions pertain to the Latin West in the same degree as to the Arabic-speaking world. However, as a student of Islam I have to leave the Latin West to the medievalist while confining myself to Islam, or, more exactly, to the medieval civilization of the Middle East. We have called this civilization *Intermediate*, because it is intermediate in *time* between Hellenism and Renaissance, intermediate in *character* between the largely secular culture of the later Roman period and the thoroughly clerical world of Medieval Europe, and intermediate in *space* between Europe and Africa on the one hand and India and China on the other thus forming for the first time in history a strong cultural link between all parts of the ancient world.

In order to obtain a balanced view of the scope and quality of this "intermediate" Islamic culture as an heir and trustee of the heritage of Greece, we have to consider four interrelated questions:

1. How did Islam look before its direct contact with the Greek sciences, or, more generally speaking, what is Islam without

the Greek ingredient ? We are able to answer this question, because two hundred years and more elapsed between the establishment of the Muslim community by the Prophet Muḥammad at the beginning of the seventh century and the great period of translation around the middle of the ninth.

2. Why was Arabic Islam so much more receptive to the Greek heritage than Germanic Europe ? To what extent were the general conditions in the Middle East more propitious than in Western Europe and in what way did the very character of the new Islamic religion and society predispose them for this great cultural acquisition ?

3. Which features of Hellenic civilization were adopted by Islam and which remained unknown to it or were refused admittance ? Which were taken over directly and intentionally and which came to it indirectly and without being recognized as such ?

4. How far and how well was the Hellenic tradition absorbed by Islam and how did it contribute to the latter's substance and permanent character ? With this another question is connected, which it is easy to formulate, but hard to answer : why did the Hellenic tradition decline so completely in the countries of Islam ? In other words : why did these countries not witness anything comparable to the Renaissance which transformed Europe ?

Turning now to the first question : Islam of course is mainly and essentially a religion. It was founded by Muḥammad, the Arabian Prophet, who died in 632, but it took another two hundred years before the nucleus created by Muḥammad developed into a full-fledged religious system. To all intents and purposes this process was completed around 830, that is exactly at the time when Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq and his school and other scholars started their great work of the translation of Greek authors.

From the outset Muḥammad's message bore a remarkably universalistic character, partly, but only partly explicable by his being the son of a caravan city which traded with peoples belonging at least to five different religions and speaking five different languages. He professed to convey to his countrymen in clear Arabic, in the language intelligible and acceptable to them, the same heavenly message which was already contained in the older monotheistic religions. This claim is fully vindicated by the basic religious and moral tenets and many of the institutions of Islam. Muḥammad regarded himself as the last in a long series of messengers of God,

beginning with the patriarchs and prophets of Israel and concluding with preachers of righteousness sent to the peoples of Arabia. Even a reminiscence of the story of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, whom some Muslim commentators identify with Alexander the Great, is not absent from the Qur'ān. In the course of Muḥammad's own lifetime Islam became a fully autonomous denomination with many institutions peculiar to itself and with rudiments of dogmas dissociating it clearly from Christianity and Judaism. Yet, the Arabian Prophet's original concept that God had revealed one and the same truth to mankind remained alive in Islam and disposed it for eclecticism and the acceptance of the most diversified influences.

In addition to this general readiness of ancient Islam to admit foreign ideas and thought-currents there were a number of specific factors which made the Muslim Arabs, in contrast to the Germanic peoples of Europe, so susceptible to the impact of Hellenism.

Firstly, unlike Western Europe, the countries conquered by the Arabs were the seats of Hellenism, where the study of the Greek sciences had never been entirely discontinued. We should not forget that Alexandria had been the metropolis of Greek learning during its heyday. We need only mention the names of Euclid and Heron, the mathematicians, of Eratosthenes and Ptolemy, the astronomers and geographers, and of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist. To be sure, by the time of the Arab conquest the school of Alexandria was no longer active. However, its tradition of learning and courses of study had remained alive in Syria, Mesopotamia and Southern Persia, precisely those countries, which formed the center of the new Muslim empire. Syriac Christians and pagans, as well as some Persians and Jews, studied and practised the ancient sciences either with the help of the Greek originals or through translations into Syriac. Thus the Muslim rulers and governors had at their doors physicians who could look after their health, mathematicians who could help them with land measurement in newly conquered countries, and astronomers who would serve them as astrologers. At the beginning, it was out of practical considerations that the Arab conquerors employed the services of men trained in Greek science. However, according to the course of studies developed originally in Alexandria, medicine was closely connected with philosophy. Therefore, when

one consulted a doctor, one got at the same time a philosophical adviser.

There were other and more essential reasons which induced the Muslims to make themselves acquainted with Greek philosophy. Islam, at that time, was still in a crude state and made a comparatively poor show, if compared with the refined systems of thought prevailing in the conquered countries. The extremely developed and ramified Christian theology, as well as philosophical rationalism which denied heavenly revelation altogether, and also Iranian dualism, which was often intertwined with gnosticism—all these constituted challenges which Islam could not afford to ignore. Moreover, inside Islam itself, whether independently or set into motion by the spiritual forces just referred to, controversies with regard to essential beliefs became widespread: what was man's relationship to God? Did man possess free will, or were all his deeds predestined by the Almighty? And what was the nature of revelation? Was the Qur'an, the Muslim scripture, eternal and uncreated like the eternal truth it represented, or did it come into being by a special act of creation? These and other controversies were soon fought out with the means of Greek logic and dialectic, which marked the beginnings of Muslim scholasticism. The borrowings from the arsenal of Greek philosophy, however, were not confined to the technical means for disputations. Many centuries had passed since Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, had tried to reconcile revelation with reason, the Hebrew scriptures with Greek rationalism. Fortified by the arguments and proofs developed in Christian theology, Islam could safely undertake to formulate its creed in terms of Greek philosophy. Above and beyond this, some Muslim thinkers, especially of Persian descent, undertook the study of Greek metaphysics and ethics for their own sake and made valuable contributions to their elaboration and systematization.

Greek thought penetrated Islam in another, less direct and more subtle way with effects, however, which were perhaps even greater. I am referring to the very core of developed Islam, Islamic mysticism. Muḥammad's religious message originally possessed a strong ascetic trend: "Renounce this world, which anyhow will come to an end very soon." However, in the course of the sweeping victories of Islam, when fabulous treasures and other comforts of life came to them as an easy prey, many Muslims

became attracted by worldly riches and pleasures. This was in stark contrast to the aim of a holy war waged in the name of a religion which also preached otherworldliness. It is natural that pious and thinking men abhorred this development. A genuinely Muslim movement of ascetism and pietism came into being, partly perhaps inspired by the example of the Christian monks and hermits who were found all over the Middle East. In Iraq, there were also contacts with Jewish pietists. By the end of the second century of Islam a new incentive was given to this pietistic movement which diverted it into the direction of mysticism. Islam is a religion of commandments. It soon assumed a legalistic and highly formalistic character, similar to its prototype, rabbinical Judaism. Pietism, which had first revolted against exaggerated worldliness, revolted again, this time against religious pedantry which, instead of sanctifying life, threatened to act as a barrier between man and his Creator. The outcome was mysticism, the strife for union or even identification with God in the rapture of ecstasy. The theory of Muslim mysticism was largely nourished by Greek thought, in particular Neo-Platonism. In the last resort, mysticism goes back to Plato's theory of knowledge. Plato taught that, in order to know a certain object, the observer himself must possess something of the nature of the object studied. This logically leads to the assumption that man cannot know God fully except by sharing God's nature, by being God. Or, as Plotinus, the great expounder of Neo-Platonism, has put it: "Our endeavour is not only to be without sin, but to be God."

Thus we have seen that the legacy of Greece has affected Islam in many of the most essential spheres of life: in the practical and secular sciences, in dogma and theology and also in mysticism, which in Islam, more than in any other religion, became a widespread movement encompassing almost all classes of society. We have attributed this great historical process to three causes: (a) the fact that the Greek heritage was still alive and available in the countries and the times of the Muslim conquest; (b) the general receptivity of Islam which was due to its originally universalistic and eclectic character; (c) specific spiritual situations during the first three centuries of Islam, which made the influx of Greek ideas and systems of thought both inevitable and fruitful.

To these three basic causes, two accessory, but most vital, factors must be added. Unlike the Germanic peoples, who had

been real barbarians, the Arabs possessed a secular culture of their own, before they experienced the impact of Judaism and Christianity. I am referring to the miracle of pre-Islamic poetry and the highly developed and extremely refined Arabic classical language which had been developed through it. The Arabs had a passion for rhetoric and eloquence, they were infatuated by their beautiful language and conveyed their enthusiasm for it to the peoples conquered by them. This had the effect that the best minds in all the countries occupied by the Arabs soon tried to express in Arabic the choicest spiritual values they themselves possessed. Thus Arabic became immensely rich and pliable, and through the work of the translators from Greek also very well fit for the expression of abstract thoughts. It was the Arabs' own cultural heritage, the devotion to their language and their inherited literature which made them so receptive to the refinements of another culture.

Secondly, Hellenic studies could flourish in Islam so profusely, because in the third, fourth and fifth centuries of Islam there developed a broad and affluent middle class, which had the means, the leisure and the ambition to acquire knowledge and with it, social status. The extraordinary role of this middle class was the outcome of a many-sided historical process which cannot be described here.⁶ The courts of the caliphs and princes gave a shelter to the Greek sciences in Islam, when they were still in their infancy. Their broad diffusion, however, was due to the new middle class.

After having discussed in detail why Arabic Islam was so receptive to the Greek heritage, there is almost no need to specify which features of the latter were absorbed by it and which remained outside its pale. Homer and Sophocles, Sappho and Thucydides—Greek epic, tragedy, lyrical poetry and classical history writing left no trace in Arabic language. (Sporadic quotations from Homer or the tragedians came to the Arabs through later sources). The Muslims had no use for the world of the pagan gods nor of the Greek polity. It is also doubtful how much of this literature was still alive and easily accessible at the time of the advent of Islam. On the other hand, the sciences of the Greeks were taken over by the Muslims in full and the latter recognized the former frankly and gratefully as their masters. There was medicine and pharmaceuticals (an enormous field, later

expanded largely by the Muslims and in particular by Arabic-speaking Jews), botany and zoology, mineralogy and meteorology, mathematics, mechanics and astronomy, the theories of sound and light, music and optics (very extensively treated by the Muslims), and above all, of course, philosophy in all its branches: logic and dialectic, ethics and metaphysics. The Greek theories of rhetoric and poetics also became known to the Arabs, but did not have much influence over them, for they had their own great traditions in these fields. Of late G. E. von Grunebaum has drawn our attention to the fact that Arabic literature has taken over not only many motives and themes from late Greek popular sources but also much of their "patterns of presentation and conventional shades of emotion".⁷

Hellenistic influence prevailed strongly in many other aspects of civilization. It is sufficient to mention architecture and the techniques of building, arts and crafts, including the treatment of metals and alchemy, law, administration, and coinage. In all these domains the Greek heritage had undergone fusions with local traditions and with foreign influences, especially from Iran and other Eastern countries. Thus the Greek share was less conspicuous in them. It was in the spiritual field, in philosophy and the sciences in which the Muslims regarded themselves as the disciples of the Greeks.

Were they good disciples? Did they grasp the spirit of Hellas? In this respect, opinions are divided. For C. H. Becker, one of the most competent students of our problem, Islam is Hellenism, to be sure an Islamized Hellenism. Following him, Werner Jaeger speaks about the internationality of Greek science, accomplished through the efforts of the Islamic scholars and their colleagues in Latin Europe. There is however another school of thought, led by such eminent German scholars as Ernst Troeltsch and H. H. Schaeder, according to whom Islam and the Orient in general, absorbed only the externals, but never the essentials of Greek culture.⁸

I believe that we are able to arrive at a just, that is to say historically correct solution of the problem, if we stop talking in such general terms as East and West, Orient and Occident and even Islam and Christianity. Instead, we have to consider each historical period in its own right. As far as Islam is concerned, three periods can clearly be distinguished. The first two hundred years of Islam were given to conquest and colonization and the

development of its religion. Then comes the great cultured period, which was characterized by the preponderance of Hellenism in the cultural field and by the middle class, as far as social organization is concerned. This period lasted approximately from the middle of the ninth century to the middle of the thirteenth. From around 1250, Islamic history was dominated by foreign soldier castes and clerical obscurantism, until the contact with the modern scientific and technological civilization brought about the profound changes which we are witnessing in our century.

With regard to the middle, the Hellenistic period, which we have called the *Intermediate Civilization*, it is fair to say that the disciple was worthy of his master. The question as to how far the individual sciences and techniques were furthered during this period must be left to the specialists in the various fields. Information about this subject is found in such books as *The Legacy of Islam*, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, 1931, or in George Sarton's *Introduction to the History of Science*, or *A History of Technology*, edited by Charles Singer and others, Oxford, 1956. We are concerned here with the problem of culture in general. How far did the Greek heritage affect the spirit of the epoch, how much did it mould the personality of the individuals.

A man of Hellenic culture is characterized by his inquisitive mind, his gift of observation, his striving for a well-balanced total view of the world and by his refined, urbane behaviour. We are in a position to form a well-founded opinion about the personality and attainments of a good many excellent representatives of the Intermediate Civilization, because they have left us a large body of writings. Naturally, there were great individual differences between the various authors, and some of them, including some well-known philosophers, can hardly be regarded as having lived up to the ideal type just described. Others, however, have realized it, combining an amazing range of knowledge with a well-integrated world view and a harmonious, ethical and humane personality.

In some respects, I should say, the Intermediate Civilization has surpassed its masters, the ancient Greeks and Romans. I have in mind the Islamic science of *Comparative Religion*, the like of which to my knowledge is not found before. We possess in Arabic comprehensive books about the tenets and beliefs of all then known denominations, sects, philosophical schools and systems of thought, Muslim and non-Muslim, ancient and contemporary. The most

famous example of this type of literature is the *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal*, completed in 1127 A.C. by al-Shāhrastānī, a scholar from Khurāsān in North-Eastern Iran. When we compare his detailed, well-informed and remarkably unbiased accounts with the Greek and Latin texts related to Judaism, we have to confess that between Tacitus and Shāhrastānī, humanity has made a great step forward.⁹ All that the illustrious Roman historian knew about monotheism was that the Jews worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem the image of a donkey. About the Sabbath, this most precious gift of Judaism to mankind, he remarked only that the Jews were the laziest of all peoples, since they took off a full day every week. In order to obtain authoritative information about Judaism, Tacitus had just to walk up one or two blocks, where he would have found educated Jews of Hellenic upbringing who could have taught him better. But he and his Greek masters, whom he copied, lacked the spirit of research and scientific responsibility needed for the task. How different was Shāhrastānī, who took pains to study in detail and to describe objectively such sects as the Persian dualists, the Manichaeans and the followers of Mazdak, all of whom were of course anathema to him from the point of view of religion.

Another illustrious example of the spirit of research alive in the Intermediate Civilization was al-Bīrūnī, also an Iranian (died around 1050). He was equally great in mathematics, astronomy and the natural sciences and as an observer of foreign peoples and creeds. In India, he taught the Greek sciences to the local scholars and learned from them Sanskrit and the contents of their religion. His *Kitāb al-Taḥqīq mā li'l-Hind* is an invaluable source of our knowledge of the culture of that country during the eleventh century and a notable document of scientific curiosity and careful observation.

We are also able to confirm Warner Jaeger's assumption that a truly international fellowship of science existed in the days of the Intermediate Civilization. Both literary sources such as Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's *al-Taḥqāt al-Aṭibbā'* and documentary evidence, such as the records of the Cairo Geniza, prove that in general a spirit of tolerance and mutual esteem prevailed between the students of the Greek sciences of different races and religions.

From the thirteenth century on, both the spirit of research and that of tolerance dwindled rapidly and became next to extinct by the end of the fifteenth, exactly when Europe started to make its great

strides forward. There were many symptoms which accompanied this decline and perhaps were partly its causes: the rule of foreign soldier castes, already referred to, the eclipse of the middle class and the replacement of a free, mercantile economy by feudalism, to be sure: feudalism of the Oriental type, and, finally, the increasing institutionalization and organization by the state of the Muslim clergy, which, in the preceding centuries, had formed a loose brotherhood of independent religious scholars.

It is, however, fair to say that the Greek heritage never became entirely lost in the countries of Islam. Logic was taught in the Muslim religious schools of higher learning, as long as their traditional syllabus was in force, and the systematic arrangement of books, which the Muslims had learned from Greek science, remained the rule, although the ancient sources of Islamic religion, which were mainly studied in the schools, were very poorly organized.

Secondly, the Arabic language which had become an efficient tool for the expression of abstract ideas in the wake of the translations from Greek, preserved its pliability and richness. Because of this profound influence of Greek on Arabic, and through it on Hebrew, Persian and Turkish, all these Middle Eastern languages were able to express modern thought, once it was conveyed to them, with comparative ease.

In our own day, a galaxy of Middle Eastern savants and *litterateurs* have taken up again the task of translation and appreciation of Greek writings, this time not of scientific books, but of belles lettres, precisely that branch of literature which had not been touched upon by the scholars of the Intermediate Civilization. Homer, the tragedians, the lyrics and the historians are now available in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. I have in mind translations made for the benefit of the educated general reader, not those destined for University studies, which include also the works of the philosophers. Today, a high-school boy in Cairo, Istanbul or Teheran would know about classical Greece approximately as much as his peer in New York or Los Angeles. However, this interest of Islamic peoples in classical Greece does not constitute a continuation of what had happened in the times of the Intermediate Civilization. In this, as in many other respects, the contemporary Muslims act as members of the world civilization to which we all belong.¹⁰

The introductory words of this paper emphasized that the fate of the Greek heritage in Islam, its quality and duration, were not

without concern and significance in our own day. What conclusions are we to draw from our review of the character and development of the Hellenistic period of Islam? As to its quality, I believe, nothing need be added to what has been already said. The example of the Intermediate Civilization proves that real values created by one culture can successfully be transferred to another. As to the duration of the Hellenistic period of Islam, which we have described as having lasted for about four hundred years, it may be compared to the Humanistic period in Europe, that is to say the prevalence of classical studies, which was in force approximately between 1500 and 1900. Of course, I am fully aware of the difference. While the Greek heritage has become an integral, albeit not always, evident part of contemporary Western culture, the same cannot be said of later Islam. The reason for this difference is that modern culture grew out of the humanism of the Renaissance, while the medieval civilization of the Middle East was not, as has been defined by C. H. Becker, Asiaticized Hellenism, but Hellenized Islam, since Islam was already a fully developed religious system, when it experienced the impact of Hellenism. When this impact became weaker and weaker, finally only Islam remained, and religion alone obviously was not strong enough to counteract the many destructive forces which were at work in the Islamic world during the last six hundred years.

In our own time, the cultural process is reversed. It is not Islam which absorbs modern civilization, but modern civilization which puts itself in the place of Islam, forcing it to participate in a world culture from which there is no escape. What is happening today cannot be compared in every respect to what happened eleven hundred years ago. We may learn from history, but history never repeats itself.

NOTES

1. Most of the literature relevant to the subject of this paper is listed in J. Kraemer, *Das Problem der islamischen Kulturgeschichte*, Tübingen, 1959. I am much indebted to this short but meaty study, although in some points I had to disagree with it. I had also an opportunity to discuss some aspects of the problem with the late-lamented author only a few days before he met an untimely death on October 2, 1961.

Shorter recent treatment of the subject is found in R. Paret, *Der Islam und das griechische Bildungsgut*, Tübingen, 1950, and G. E. von Grünebaum, *Islam and Hellenism*, in *Islam, Essays*, London, 1961, pp. 159-67. Richard

- Walzer, *Greek into Arabic, Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford, 1962, contains both general articles on the legacy of the classics in the Islamic world and highly specialized studies.
2. Cf. Franz Rosenthal, *Al-Mubashshir Ibn Fātik*, *Oriens*, (13-14), Leiden, 1961, pp. 132-58.
 3. D. Z. H. Baneth, A Doctor's Library in Egypt at the Time of Maimonides, *Tarbiz* (30), Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 171-85 (in Hebrew, English summary, *ibid.*, p. vi).
 4. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, Maimonides against Galen on Philosophy and Cosmogony, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, University of Egypt, (5), 1939, pp. 53-88.
 5. R. Walzer, *op. cit.*, p. 103ff.
 6. Cf. S. D. Goitein, The Rise of the Near-Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times, *Journal of World History*, (3), Neuchatel, 1957, pp. 583-604.
 7. Cf. Creative Borrowing: Greece in the Arabian Nights, in *Medieval Islam*, Chicago, 1946, p. 294ff.
 8. C. H. Becker, *Islamstudien* I, Leipzig, 1924, pp. 24-53 and *passim*. Werner Jaeger, *Die Antike und das Problem der Internationalität der Geisteswissenschaften*, *Inter Nationes* I, Berlin, 1931, 93b. H. H. Schaeder, Der Orient und das griechische Erbe, *Die Antike* (4), 1928, p. 226ff. E. Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, p. 706ff., see J. Kraemer, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.
 9. Cf. Theodor Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs Grecs et Romains relatifs au judaïsme*, Paris, 1890.
 10. See J. Kraemer, Der Islamische Modernismus und das griechische Erbe, *Der Islam* (38), 1962, pp. 1-27.



The Commercial Mail Service in Medieval Islam

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kašāsu, *kašāšu* III "kauen, nagen" (453);

"sem." (ib.); this root does not exist in Ethiopic with the meaning given in Akkadian.

kašābu etwa "mindern" (456);

G. *qanṭab* "segment, piece", with augmented *n*.

kāšu "Haut abziehen, schinden" (458);

Tna. *qāčāyā* "cut off" (from *qsy*), Amh. *qāččā* "cut".

kašādu "erreichen, ankommen; erobern" (459);

the meaning of Akkadian "conquer" is perhaps a denominative of *kišādu* "neck" (that is "bend the neck") to be compared with G. *kašad*, Te. *saḡad*, Mh. *kensit*.

kašātu "abschneiden" (462);

Ar. *qaṣaṭa* "strip off", G. *qāšāṭā* "pull up, snatch".

THE COMMERCIAL MAIL SERVICE IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM*

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THE MAIN SUBJECT OF THIS PAPER is not the *barīd*, the governmental courier and intelligence service, which has often been treated, but the commercial post used by the population at large. However, as Ibn Khaldūn, the Tunisian philosopher of history, has pointed out, the subject population is always prone to imitate the ways of its rulers. The *barīd* was no exception. To a certain extent, the mail service run by private enterprise was modeled after the fashion of the governmental *barīd*. Therefore I should like to say a few words about the latter, before enlarging on the former.

The *barīd* was taken over by the Arabs from the Persians, as is proved by the terms used by it and other evidence. It was linked up, albeit loosely, with similar services in the Chinese and Byzantine empires. The most extensive description of the *barīd* in the Omayyad and Abbasid periods, known to the present writer, is to be found in Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*.¹ Mez makes also the interesting observation that this institution must have been invented in one particular state, from where it was subsequently transferred to others. For in all the three services, the Islamic, the Chinese and the Byzantine, it

was customary to dock the tails of the mounts used in them. Such a specific trait could hardly have been invented independently in three different places. Muslim writers derived the very word *barīd* from this custom of shortening the tails of the government mounts, *burīdan* meaning "cutting" in Persian. However, *barīd* no doubt comes from the Latin *veredarius*, a word, which under the form *beldār*, *buldār* is common in talmudic literature and found also in Syriac. The Arabic form of the word is nearer to the Latin and Greek forms than the Hebrew and Aramaic ones. Thus, it stands to reason that the widely traveled Arabs became familiar with this Roman institution directly and long before Islam. This would explain why *barīd* was used also in the Islamic East, while the preponderance of Sasanid influence would account for the occurrence of Persian terms in North Africa and Egypt, as we shall presently see. As is well known, already Herodotus 8:98 describes the governmental post as a Persian invention. It might have been based, however, on Babylonian antecedents.

Of late, the subject has been treated by Dominique Sourdel in the relevant article in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. A few items may be added to his bibliography. First, six papyri preserved in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and published by D. S. Margoliouth. In these, the *ṣāḥib barīd Ushmūn*, the postmaster of Ushmūn in Upper Egypt, is advised by his

* This paper was presented to the meeting of the American Oriental Society in New York on April 8, 1964.

¹ (Heidelberg, 1922) pp. 464-471. The present writer has not seen the Cairene dissertation on the subject, referred to below.

superior to let certain government messengers, including one of the governor himself, ride on the mounts of the *barīd*. Thus we see that even a government official could not use this service except with the written permission of the governor or finance director of the province. These papyri, which come from the years 134–136 H. (751–753 A.D.), are the more interesting, as they repeatedly make mention of the *dābbat furānīq*, the courier's mount. *Furānīq* is a Persian word, common in the Babylonian Talmud under the form *parwanqā* and found already in pre-Islamic poetry, in a poem by Imru' ul-Qays. (By the way, *furānīq* is not a plural, as the article in the new edition of *EI* might suggest, but the singular).²

Secondly, attention should be given to an even earlier document referring to our subject, a dispatch written on leather and sent in 717/18 by a Soghdian prince to his Arab superior. It was published by Professor and Madame Kratchkovsky in an article entitled "The Earliest Arabic Document from Central Asia" and is included in Kratchkovsky's *Selected Works*, volume I.³

Thirdly, in Omayyad times, the *barīd* was most important as a means of military communication. When al-Ḥajjāj sent a big proud army, the *jaysh at-ṭawawīs*, the peacock army, against the Turkish ruler of Kābul in present-day Afghanistan, the army never proceeded before having first established relay stations equipped with *barīd* mounts in its rear.⁴

Finally, Albert Dietrich in his publication of Arabic letters from the Hamburg papyri collection provides some additional information about our subject.⁵ Mr. Rashād 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib of Cairo kindly drew my attention to an Arabic Ph.D. thesis dealing with the *barīd*: *Ta'rīkh al-barīd fi 'l-aṣr al-Islāmī* by Naẓīr Sa'dāwī.

Turning now to our main topic, the commercial couriers serving the population at large, we have to concede that our whole material comes from one single source: the documents of the Cairo Geniza. There is perhaps no need any more to explain what the Geniza is. Those who have not yet heard of it may find pertinent information in the present writer's article "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History" in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, volume 80, April–June 1960. In short, the Geniza Documents are manuscripts mostly in Hebrew characters, but in the Arabic language, coming mainly from the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. At that time, and especially under the Seljuks and in the wake of the Crusades, the governmental postal service had decayed or was altogether given up. However, I am not so sure that the *rusul*, as the bearers of government messages were called at that time, were merely special emissaries, as seems to be assumed in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. It is not excluded that they represent a more or less regular service. The following passage from a Geniza letter written around 1200 has some bearing on the subject. Its writer was a Jewish physician from Jerusalem who was with his son in the service of the then governor of that city, al-Muwaffaq Nūr al-Dawla. Because of the Sabbath, on which a Jew was not supposed to travel, the doctor had got stuck in al-Muṭaylib, a caravan station in the Sinai desert. After having described the hardships endured on his journey the writer continues: "*Falamma an jāza ḥāmīlu ḥādhihi 'l-'aḥruf, wahuwa rasūl al-sultān, naṣarahu 'llāh, tafaddala waqāl: uktub kitāban nuwaṣṣīlhu lak fa-awṣaytuhu an yusallimahu li-aḥad mamālīk al-mawlā al-ajall al-kabīr al-muwaffaq nūr al-dawla yuwaṣṣīlhu libnī.*" "When the bearer of this letter, namely the messenger of the Sultan—may God grant him victory—passed through, he most kindly said: write a letter and I shall transmit it for you. Thus I instructed him to deliver it to one of the servants of the illustrious great lord al-Muwaffaq Nūr al-Dawla for transmittance to my son." On the reverse side, in addition to the address, the following remark is written in

² D. S. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of Arabic Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester, 1933) pp. 28–31.

³ I. Y. Krachkovsky, *Selected Works*, I, pp. 182–212.

⁴ Ṭabarī, *Annales*, ed. De Goeje, (Leiden, 1883 ff.) II, p. 1045, line 11.

⁵ Albert Dietrich, *Arabische Briefe aus der Papyrus-sammlung der Hamburger Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek* (Hamburg, 1955) p. 55.

Arabic letters: "*balligh tu'jar*." "Deliver and you will receive reward (namely from God)." This phrase, which is written on scores of Geniza letters means: "The forwarding of this letter is a personal favor. No payment is to be made for it." This shows that the *rasūl*, like the ancient couriers of the *barīd*, was a man of higher standing and knew the doctor well from previous visits to Jerusalem. Moreover, the whole tenor of the passage seems to indicate that the appearance of the *rasūl* in al-Muṭaylib was not an extraordinary coincidence, but a regular occurrence. The only fact emphasized as noteworthy in the letter was the courtesy of the courier who did a personal favor to the writer.⁶

Be this as it may, in general, the Geniza records had no opportunity to refer to the governmental post. For this deficiency they recompense us by abundant information about the mail service used by private citizens.

As alluded to before, to a certain extent this service was organized on the lines of the *barīd*. Its very nomenclature points in this direction: The couriers were called *fayj*, plural *fuyūj*, an Arabization of Persian *payk*, which is derived from *pā*, "foot." Literally, the word means "runner," but it was a most common term for the riders of the *barīd*.⁷ From the noun *fayj*, a verb *fayyaj*, "to use the services of a courier," was derived in the Geniza, but I have not yet found it in another source.⁸ The Hebrew equivalent of *fayj* in the Geniza records is *rāš*, "runner," which is the Biblical word from the book of Esther designating the Persian *payk*.⁹ *Fayj* was used all over North Africa including Egypt. On the route Cairo-Jerusalem, Tyre, Damascus, the word *kutubī*, "bearer of *kutub*, letters," was more common. In one and the same letter couriers operating between Egypt and Jerusalem are referred to as *kutubīyyīn* and those going to the Muslim West

as *fuyūj*.¹⁰ For the route Alexandria-Cairo, where normally *fayj* is used, I also found *rasūl* several times. Once, in a list of taxpayers from Fustāt, the word appears as the name of an occupation. In one letter we read: "I missed the *rasūl*. Therefore my letter is late." All this seems to indicate that *rasūl* was applied also to the regular mail service, a usage reflecting perhaps also on the meaning of the governmental *rasūl* appearing in Fatimid and Ayyubid times.¹¹

The commercial *fuyūj*, like the *barīd*, were found solely on land. Although the volume of maritime traffic outstripped transportation by land many times, we never find a *fayj* on a ship. During summer, roughly between April and September, letters were sent *fi 'l-marākib*, "in the ships" (in the plural, because for reasons of safety normally several copies were dispatched). These letters were confided to business friends, and in case there were none on a ship, which rarely happened, the captain did the job. In winter, roughly between October and March, one used the services of the *fuyūj*. In summer, too, the *fuyūj* were not out of business, as far as international traffic was concerned. For the ships used to sail in convoys, in spring normally from the end of April to the beginning of June and in the fall from the middle of August to the end of September. In between, caravans and *fuyūj* filled the gap left by overseas transportation. As may be remarked in passing, this restriction of the commercial mail service to overland travel seems to indicate that it originated in Persia, a continental country, and not in Byzantium, an essentially maritime power.

There was another most characteristic aspect in which the commercial *fuyūj* followed the example of the governmental *barīd*. This institution maintained relay stations where the riding animals—mules, horses, or camels—were frequently

⁶ Oxford, Bodleian, ms. Heb. d 66 (Catalogue of Heb. Mss. by Neubauer-Cowley no. 2878), fol. 57, lines 10-12.

⁷ Cf. Mez, *Renaissance des Islams*, p. 464.

⁸ TS (Taylor-Schechter Collection of the University Library, Cambridge) 8 J 24, f. 11, line 4.

⁹ Ms. Mosseri L 199, quoted by Jacob Mann, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, III, p. 265.—Esther 3:13, 15 etc.

¹⁰ TS 10 J 24, fol. 4, lines 2 and 9. TS 16.7, verso, line 5. TS 10 J 14, fol. 20. David Kaufmann Collection, Budapest XV, verso, line 6.

¹¹ Oxford, Bodleian, ms. Heb. b 3, fol. 16 (Catalogue 2806, no. 15), line 25. TS 24.29, lines 20 and 43, publ. J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Cincinnati, 1931), I, p. 370. TS 20. 175, verso, line 3.

changed, but one and the same messenger carried the dispatches entrusted to him from the starting point to the final destination. The same was done by the private couriers. One and the same man would carry the mail from Qayrawān, Tunisia, all the way along to Cairo, or even from Almeria, Spain, through the whole of North Africa straight to Alexandria.¹² It is also not excluded that there was a direct service between Baghdad and Qayrawān. For a man writing from the latter city says: "In these days there arrived many letters with the *fuyūj* which were dated six months back in Baghdad." But this mail might have been forwarded through business friends in Old Cairo different from the addressee, who is known to us from the Geniza as the middle man between the Jewish academies of Baghdad and the scholars and donators in North Africa in that period.¹³

Many Geniza letters contain expressions of apprehension that they might fall into the hands of unauthorized persons. In order to avoid such occurrences, one confided one's correspondence either to a close business friend or to a trusted *fayj*. Therefore, it is not surprising that repeatedly the names of such mail carriers are mentioned, which shows that they were personally known both to the senders and to the addressees. Thus far, I have noted *four* such cases for the route Tunisia-Egypt, *seven* for that of Alexandria-Cairo and *one* for Cairo-Ramle. But there are more.

It was perhaps due to the confidential nature of the courier's occupation that Jews, too, were engaged in it, although this must have involved the persons concerned in many difficulties, because of the prohibition of travel on Sabbath, referred to before. The Jewish courier was needed also for another purpose. When the mail arrived, the women folk, most of whom did not know how to read, needed some one to read it out to them. When no one else was around, the courier did the

job, and letters written by Jews, we remember, normally were written in Hebrew characters.¹⁴

This situation is well illustrated by a passage from a letter of an elderly lady in Qayrawān writing to her brothers out on a business trip in Egypt: "Your letters to your families reporting your well-being have arrived. I went to the *fayj* and he read them out to me in full. I was very sad to note that I did not see from any one of you greetings to me, let alone a letter." The seasoned courier probably allowed himself this little break of confidence, because he knew that the brothers would not mind, since the letters from the foreign country would anyway be read out again and again in the family assemblies back home in Qayrawān. In this connection, attention should be drawn to an Aramaic proverb, which occurs several times in the Babylonian Talmud: "The man who is able to read a letter should become its bearer." (*Qaryānā de'iggartā ihū lehwē parwanqā*.) This shows that in Sasanid Persia too, a man was chosen as *parwanqā*, *furāniq*, or courier, because of his knowledge of reading.

The Geniza papers show that the *fuyūj* were not organized in a guild or any other form of cooperative association. Still, there must have been some kind of regular arrangements among them, for our records often speak about them in the plural and indicate that they set out or arrived at more or less fixed times. A man from the East writes to Tunisia: "Dispatch the goods in the first ship sailing (in spring), but in the meantime acknowledge with the couriers the arrival of my shipments." A widow in Tunisia, writing to her brother in Egypt, complains: "The couriers have arrived, but with no letter from you." In a long epistle going from Old Cairo to Jerusalem we read: "The letters of So and So will be forwarded to you with the couriers."¹⁵ In two letters, one written in Fustāt and one in al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, great concern was expressed

¹² Oxford, Bodleian b 13 (Catalogue 2834) fol. 49, line 4. TS 13 J 14, fol. 1, line 3, publ. S. D. Goitein, *Tarbiz* 24 (1955), p. 45.

¹³ Cf. J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, I, p. 143, note 9.

¹⁴ TS 12.262. Translated in English in *Readings in Mediterranean Social History*, a volume in preparation by the present writer.

¹⁵ The sources quoted above in note 10.

when the *fuyūj* had not arrived by the month of January.¹⁶

The regularity of this postal service is also attested by those passages in the Geniza records where the addressee is implored to use it (and not to wait until some business friend would make the journey). In a letter dispatched from Qayrawān to Old Cairo, the writer asks five times that his letters be forwarded to Baghdad by courier and that the answers from there be brought via Cairo to his own place through the same service. A man from Tripoli, Lybia, writing to the East, asks the addressee to answer by all means "even with the couriers." He meant to say that it was preferable to spend money on the forwarding of letters than to delay their dispatch. The postal service between Alexandria and Cairo was so regular that a merchant writing from Alexandria would express his disappointment when, on a Thursday, no mail had arrived from his business correspondent in the capital. He himself, writing on Sunday, remarks: "I have already sent you another letter before the Sabbath," presumably on Friday with the courier going back to Cairo. In a letter from al-Mahdiyya, the writer's partner in Fustāt is requested to send a letter "with every *fayj*." An Egyptian merchant sojourning in Tyre, Lebanon, asks his partner back home to write him a letter every week. He promised to do the same—and he seems to have kept his promise, for in the course of years I have found seven of his letters addressed to his partner, most of which obviously were written on the same business trip to Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.¹⁷

A final indication of the regularity and wide scope of the commercial mail service is its relatively inexpensive cost. For a letter from Alexandria to Cairo one dirham exactly was paid. The letter from Almeria, Spain, to Alexandria, re-

ferred to before, cost one and a half dirhams, four letters having been dispatched to the same address. For an urgent letter sent from Jerusalem to Ramle, half a dirham was charged. In all these cases, payment was to be made after delivery.¹⁸

It is instructive to compare these fees for the *regular* mail service with the remuneration paid to a *special* messenger. One going from Alexandria to Old Cairo received a dinar in advance, which would mean perhaps that he got an additional payment after delivery of his message. For another one got one and a half dinars for the same route and a third one—one and a quarter dinars plus expenses. This is about *fifty* times as much as the regular mail. A messenger sent from Cairo to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt was promised one and three quarter dinars together with expenses, of which one quarter was paid to him in advance, while the addressee was asked to honor him, which probably meant giving him an additional remuneration. These special messengers are referred to as *rasūl* in Arabic and *shālī'ah* in Hebrew.¹⁹

How did the commercial mail couriers travel? As far as our sources go, we must conclude that this service possessed no relay stations of its own, but had to utilize the regular caravan traffic. Therefore, we frequently read: "Other letters will follow with the caravan," or "I sent you letters with the caravan," expressions which are used in the same sense as references to mailing with couriers. Staying with a caravan in the towns visited also gave the courier opportunity to collect additional mail. This aspect is well illustrated in a letter sent from al-Mahdiyya around 1060. The writer had sent a letter to his brother in Fustāt with a courier going East. Immediately afterwards he received a message from his brother that a son was born to the latter. At least a week later, the brother in al-Mahdiyya wrote a letter

¹⁶ Oxford, Bodleian, ms. Heb. c 28 (Catalogue 2876), fol. 33, verso, line 16. TS 13 J 8, fol. 5, line 3, and verso, line 9.

¹⁷ David Kaufmann Collection, *Budapest* XIII, line 25. TS 13 J 18, fol. 8, lines 36 and 4. University Collection, University Library, Cambridge Or 1080 J 42, line 27, and verso, line 12.

¹⁸ Cf. the sources referred to in note 12 and Oxford, Bodleian, ms. Heb. b 13, fol. 49 (Catalogue 2834, no. 30), Postscript.

¹⁹ TS 10 J 10, fol. 3, line 20, and above note 11.

of congratulations, expressing in it the hope that the letter would still reach the courier in Sfax, a town in southeast Tunisia, situated on the caravan route to Egypt.²⁰

With this we have arrived at our last question: the speed of this commercial mail service. Naturally, we cannot expect uniformity. A special messenger made the round-trip, Alexandria-Cairo-Alexandria, in seven days. Since he was not delayed by distributing and collecting mail, one way must have required not more than three or three and a half days.²¹ This is confirmed by other reports about journeys between the two cities which lasted four to five days as a rule. A letter from Old Cairo was received in Ascalon, Palestine, twelve days after the date on which it was written, which is not bad.²² A letter written in Qayrawān on August 21, 1008, arrived in Old Cairo on November 1st of the same year. However, it is not entirely excluded that it was dispatched in a ship and not by overland mail.²³ On the fifth day of the Jewish month of Marheshwan, which corresponds approximately to October 15, a *fayj* called by name arrived in al-Mahdiyya from Alexandria announcing that the fall convoy of Tunisian ships had safely arrived in that port. This runner could hardly have been on his way for more than one month.²⁴

On the other hand, it took a full fifty days for a letter from Old Cairo to reach Qūṣ in Upper Egypt. This shows again that the *fuyūj* normally used the regular means of transportation, for in

another document we read that a family needed forty-five days for the same journey.²⁵

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that we find also a *fayj tayyār*, an express courier, something in between a regular *fayj*, who moved too slowly, and a special messenger, who was too expensive. In one and the same letter we read about a regular *fayj*, who was probably Jewish (his name was Surūr, Hebrew Simḥa, a common Jewish name in those days) and an express courier called Muḥammad.²⁶ When an Alexandrian asks his business correspondent in Old Cairo, *tutayyir lī kitābak*, "fly your letter to me," he most probably referred not to carrier pigeons, but to this express service. Carrier pigeons might be intended in another letter, which says: "Send me the *barā'* (release or receipt) with the bearer of this letter or with the birds," *walaw kāna illā ma'a 'l-tayr*, possibly a technical term, parallel to the usual request to send a letter either *bi 'l-marākib*, "by boat," or *ma'a 'l-fuyūj*, "with the mail couriers."²⁷

I am inclined to believe that the mail service for the population at large was operating during the ninth and tenth centuries not less, and perhaps even more, than during the eleventh and twelfth centuries when we read about it in the Geniza records. There must be references to it in Arabic and Persian literature. The main purpose of this paper is indeed to draw the attention of readers to this institution and to ask them to look out for such references in the sources studied by them.

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to the librarians and keepers of manuscripts of the libraries whose manuscripts he was privileged to use.

²⁰ TS 16.179. Translated in *Readings in Mediterranean Social History* (see above, note 14).

²¹ TS 10 J 11, fol. 17. He received four dirhams per day, a total of twenty eight dirhams, which, as is stated in the latter, equalled at that time one gold dinar.

²² David Kaufmann Collection I, line 8.

²³ University Library, Cambridge Or 1080 J 154.

²⁴ TS 10 J 9, fol. 5, lines 2-5.

²⁵ University Library Cambridge, Or 1080 J 70, lines 6-7. TS 8 Ja 1, fol. 4.

²⁶ TS 13 J 19, fol. 9, lines 2 and 22.

²⁷ TS 8 J 18, fol. 18, margin. TS 13 J 18, fol. 27, lines 24-25.



COMMERCIAL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COUNTRIES OF MEDIEVAL ISLAM

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COMMERCIAL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COUNTRIES OF MEDIEVAL ISLAM

S. D. GOITEIN

This study is not based on legal texts nor on any literary sources. It summarizes and discusses actual documents, either business correspondence referring to partnerships or legal documents such as contracts, depositions in court or court records. All this material comes from the so-called Cairo Geniza, a treasure of manuscripts written mainly during the Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid periods and originally preserved in a synagogue in Old Cairo. The nature of this board of ancient writings and its relevance for Islamic social history has been described by the present writer in a number of papers, e.g., "The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Muslim Civilisation" in *Studia Islamica*, III (Paris 1955), pp. 75-91,

The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 80 (1960), pp. 91-100, and, of late, in his book *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, scheduled to appear in Spring 1965. See also the Bibliographical Note at the end of this article.

Geniza (pronounce : *Gheneeza*), as may be remarked in passing, is derived from the same Persian word as Arabic *janāzah*, burial, and has almost the same meaning. It is a place where discarded writings were buried so that the name of God which might have been written on them might not be desecrated. Thus a *geniza* is the opposite of an orderly archive. Writings were confided to it not in order to preserve them for future use, but, in contradistinction, because they were of no use any more. However, while those records had lost their value for their original proprietors, they often constitute priceless treasures for the historian.

All the documents discussed in this paper, albeit mostly written in Hebrew characters, are in Arabic language. Moreover, in respect of many of them it is evident that they were made in accordance with the prevailing law of the country and in some contracts it is expressly stated that they were concluded according to Muslim law. A great variety of situation is reflected in these documents. However, as Dr. A. L. Udovitch, of Brandeis University, who is

preparing a volume on partnership in Islamic law and who read this paper, has assured me there is hardly a single legal aspect discussed here which has not been touched upon by one or another of the Muslim jurists. Incidentally, this shows also that the latter were not merely theoretical hairsplitters but tried to cope with the exigencies of real life.

Before presenting a selection from the Geniza material on formal partnerships, it is necessary to state that at least one-half of the international trade was based on informal business corporation which could last for a lifetime and even for several generations. The most common, and so to say official designation for informal business cooperation, was *ṣuḥbah*, or "companionship". Merchants of lesser stature would simply be described as the *ṣāhib* or "companion" of a merchant or firm of greater reputation. Friendship, *ṣadūqāh*, is also very common. "Cooperation" *mu'āmalah*, literally "having dealings with each other," would be used in order to describe a relationship as informal, not based on a legal instrument. Other expressions, such as *muḥāmalah*, "mutual kindness", or *muwāsalaḥ*, "close relationship", were also used.

The present writer must confess that it took him quite a number of years until he understood the nature of informal business cooperation as evident in countless Geniza papers. For at first sight it seemed strange that a merchant should invest so much time and work in the mere expectation that his efforts would be properly reciprocated, or, as our sources say, "he serves there and I serve here", "you are in my place there, for you know well that I am your support here". However, this is exactly what happened. An *'umlaḥ*, or commission, was paid for special service, not for the relationship with which we are concerned here. The fact remains that the Mediterranean and Indian trade, as revealed by the Cairo Geniza, was largely based not upon cash benefits or legal guarantees, but on the human qualities of mutual trust and friendship.

1. PARTNERSHIP AND COMMENDA

Informal business cooperation, as has been observed, could last through a lifetime or even through several generations. However, formal partnerships mostly were of short duration and limited to specific undertakings. On the other hand, this legal institution was enormously developed and encompassed practically every economic activity. It could be *industrial*, such as running a workshop, or

building a house ; or *commercial*, being as common in the wholesale trade as in retail business ; or it was connected with *public administration* such as tax-farming, the basis or the whole economy of the state, or work in the royal mint or exchange, and occasionally even *public office*, like that of judges, court clerks or cantors.

The profuse development of the institution of partnership in the Middle Ages was due to the fact that it substituted in two large fields which are covered today by other forms of contracts : *employment* on the one hand and *loans on interest* on the other. In our book, *A Mediterranean Society*, we have studied twenty-six contracts of industrial partnership, many of which are nothing but veiled forms of employment, and we shall meet with similar arrangements in commerce and banking. We also tried to explain why medieval people were so much opposed to the idea of being in the service of another and preferred a more dignified form of cooperation.¹ The difficult problem of loans on interest has been studied elsewhere.² However, even a cursory examination of the Geniza material proves that lending money for interest was not only shunned religiously but was also *of limited significance economically*. The reason for this was in some measure the same which induced people to avoid employment : "The borrower is a slave to the lender" (Proverbs 22 : 7). Borrowing money manifested some sort of dependence—a state of affairs underlined by the fact that loans were often given as an act of charity. Therefore, *the economic role of financial investment today was fulfilled by various forms of partnership in the period and society discussed here*.

Partnerships could be concluded with regard to money, goods, or work, or with regard to two or to all three of these values. The most variegated combinations appear in our records. In principle, there was no difference between these variations. Any of them could be and was referred to loosely as partnership, *shirkah* in Arabic. It is, however, practicable to discern between two main types of contracts : one in which the contractors offer the various services in equal or unequal shares and partake in profit or less in proportion to their investments ; and the other in which one or several partners contribute capital or goods or both, while the other or others do the work, in which case they receive a smaller share in the profit—normally one-third, but do not participate in the losses. The former was called *shirkah*, partnership, in the strict sense of the word, or, even more commonly, *khulṭah*, literally "mixing (of

the investments)". The relationship was also expressed by some figurative phrases, which as *kīs wāḥid*, "one purse", or *lil-wasaṭ*, "into the midst", or *baynanā*, "between us", because, as we learn from several documents, the "mixed" money was actually put into one purse, and, we may imagine, this purse lay in the midst between the two contractors at the time when they threw their coins into it in the presence of witnesses. All these figurative expressions are found already in Talmudic literature in Hebrew, but seem to belong to the legal language of the Near East in general.

The second type of contracts was called *qirād*, meaning "mutual loan"—one lending capital and the other work until the completion of the relationship—or *muḍārabah*, "mutual participation in an enterprise". The different schools of Muslim law prefer one or another of these two expressions. However, in the Geniza records, they seem to be equally frequent and not related to a specific country or period. In the queries addressed to Moses, Maimonides (1135-1204 A.C.) the two terms are used indiscriminately. We render these terms with *commenda*, since this medieval form of business cooperation in Europe was essentially the same as its Muslim counterpart and was perhaps derived from it. In the parlance of the Jewish courts, the *commenda* was called *qirād al-gōyīm* "mutual loan according to Muslim law" and was sharply differentiated from the *qirād betōrat 'isqā*, a *qirād* in form of an *'isqā*, "the Jewish partnership", in which the manager received two-thirds of the profits, but also was responsible for losses.³ The Jewish *'isqā* was less common in the Geniza period than the Muslim *commenda*, as is proved by the extant contracts and an express statement to this effect in Maimonides' Responsa.⁴ The *'isqā* was less practicable. For a merchant who invested only work, but no capital, usually did not have much money. Consequently his responsibility for losses was only of limited value.

In a number of legal documents referring to partnerships the manager who also invests capital, albeit sometimes only of a small or merely nominal amount, receives special benefits in cash or otherwise, which are described as "compensation for his toil and work", or "for his work and food". Since these expressions are invariably in Hebrew in midst of an Arabic text it stands to reason that a contract according to Jewish law is intended although Muslim law has similar provisions. The Mishna provided these benefits in certain partnerships in order to avoid their use for veiled

taking of interest and usury.⁵ As we shall presently see, some other aspects, such as the trustworthiness of the partners and the oath incumbent on them are also expressed in Hebrew terms. In general, however, it is by no means always evident according to which law, Muslim or Jewish, a contract was made and which school of lawyers within one of the two religions was adhered to. We are perhaps right in assuming that local custom ("the merchants' law") together with the specific aims pursued by the contractors in the formation of a partnership were largely responsible for the conditions laid down in a contract. Both Muslim and Jewish laws, with a few exceptions, leave to their followers considerable freedom with regard to the legal form of their economic undertakings, and Maimonides' Code states with specific reference to partnerships that customs current in a country are binding, as long as no stipulations are made to the contrary.⁶

As the Geniza records prove, the following points had to be considered in the conclusion of a partnership or a commenda :

1. The number and status of the contractors.
2. The object of the contract and the aims pursued with it (which are not always self-evident from its wording).
3. The nature and extent of the contribution of the partners (capital, goods, premises or work or two or more of these). Likewise, specific rights and privileges granted to them.
4. The share of the partners in profit and loss and their responsibility for the capital invested.
5. Conditions with regard to expenditure for the partnership and living expenses of the partners.
6. Whether or not the partners were allowed to conclude other partnerships with regard to a similar object during the duration of their connection.
7. Whether the partner or partners who managed the common business were regarded as "trustworthy witnesses accepted in court" and were therefore freed from "the oath incumbent on partners" (both Hebrew expressions) or not. Normally the stronger partner imposed this exemption on the other contractors. Each partner was expected "to exert himself for the common good, to shun cheating, negligence and easy-going, to act as a pious person and a gentleman and not to put his own interest above those of his associate" but only in comparatively few contracts were such stipulations made in full.⁷

8. Except in case of specific commercial ventures, which were, however, the most common object of an association, the duration of a partnership had to be defined.

9. Similarly, it was important to state when the partners would be obliged to render accounts. Normally this was done at the conclusion of the partnership. But in many cases interim accounts were stipulated or promised.

10. Finally special conditions of any kind could be included.

Normally a contract (let alone a letter referring to a partnership) does not contain all the points enumerated. Much was left to current practise or to oral agreements, which incompleteness, however, often led to law-suits. Law-suits of this type appear in queries submitted to legal authorities as well as in actual court records.

As to the number of partners, it has been observed that Muslim lawyers usually envisage only partnerships between two.⁸ However, this should be understood merely as a manner of legal idiom. In reality, as the Geniza shows, partnerships between three or four (or more) were as common as those between two associates. We have met with contracts between four and five persons while discussing industrial cooperation. In an account written in 1058, two out of five partnerships listed were concluded between three merchants, one of whom participated with a share of one-eighth only.⁹ In a letter mention is made of a partnership to which two persons contributed each one-third and two others each one-sixth of the capital.¹⁰ A query submitted to Maimonides speaks of a partnership consisting of three investors at least and one manager.¹¹ We shall have opportunity to refer in the following repeatedly to partnerships of three or four members, respectively.

It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the situation was the same in connections between Jews and Muslims. Two brothers in Qayrawān had a partnership with a Muslim in 1048.¹² Several cases of four associates, one of whom was a Muslim, are referred to in Chapter VI, of *A Mediterranean Society* where the legality of the conclusion of partnership between the followers of these two religions will be discussed.¹³

The commonplace object of a partnership is the case when the two contractors put identical sums (200 dirhams in the examples we are referring to here) "into one purse", "sell and buy, take and give and do business with their capital and their bodies" and share profit and loss, as well as managerial cost and living expenses in

equal parts.¹⁴ Participations in business ventures with different shares are of similar frequency, while profit, loss and expenditure are divided in proportion to the investment. A Tunisian merchant would have one-sixth in a deal of lacquer sent from Egypt, having a total worth of 365 dinars, and five-sixths in a shipment of indigo and sal ammoniac dispatched from the same country.¹⁵ We have met cases of this type before when we discussed partnerships consisting of more than two persons. The division of such shipments between the partners required great expert knowledge and used to be undertaken either by the receiving party if it had sufficient authority, or by a common business friend in the presence of at least two other acquaintances serving as witnesses or by a local representative of merchants.¹⁶

The situation becomes somewhat more complicated in a court record, where one partner contributes fifty-nine out of a total of one hundred and fifty dinars and shares two-thirds of profit and loss, while each partner has the right of unilateral disposition of the common money kept in a leather bag. The two were merchants engaged in the sale of silk in the Egyptian Rif, each of them travelling to a different town at a time.¹⁷

Sometimes, the reason for the seemingly unequal treatment of the partners can only be surmised. In a partnership in a store of drugs, the two contractors share work, profit and loss, as well as living expenses, but one pays in one hundred dinars and the other only fifty. As the latter bore the byname "the druggist", we may assume that only he had a licence for the store or even that the very object of the contract was apprenticeship. This surmise is corroborated by the fact that the contract was made for two years, a period noted also in another document as sufficient for apprenticeship.¹⁸ Another contract in a store of drugs, to which each of the two partners contributed the very considerable sum of three hundred dinars, state, as expected, that profit and loss were to be shared "equally in halves", but contains also the following stipulation: "When Mr. Amram (the other partner) is in town, he may join me in selling and buying, as it pleases him". It is not evident why Mr. Amram should receive an equal share in the profit, since he was not supposed to contribute work regularly. Evidently his *jāh*, or social position, made a connection with him profitable.¹⁹ Dr. Udovitch draws my attention to al-Sarakhsī, *Mabsūṭ* XI, p. 159, where a contract of this type is foreseen in Muslim Ḥanafī law.

Benefiting from the prestige of one's associate is expressly mentioned as aim of a partnership in an interesting document in which a local notable castigates two partners of his brothers from a foreign country. He was supposed to receive one-half of the profit and the two brothers the other half. The turnover from the store had been 4,000 dinars during fifteen months, while every month thirty dinars had been paid for "the debt on the store". However, besides the dinars in cash, the notable had received only half a dinar per week (the two brothers together got the same sum). Since he implies improper management by the brothers, his "sitting in the store", which was regarded as vital for the brothers' success, most probably was not very regular. It is not excluded that the monthly debt was paid to none else but the complainant.²⁰

The prominence of imponderables and the great latitude in the concept of the object of a partnership are well illustrated by a contract concluded between 'Ulla, "a Trustee of the Court", and a prominent merchant, and a man called Yahyā. The partners invested 150 and 120 dinars, respectively. Out of the total of 270, one received to his management 200, the other 70. Profits from all transactions made by either side would be divided in equal shares. Moreover, any profit made by either side with capital received from third persons on commission, in partnership or on commenda, would be also equally shared, while losses would be borne only for goods bought with the capital belonging to the partnership. Each partner had to restitute the capital handled by him including goods perished on transport by land or on the sea. The partnership was to last for a period of two years. It was successfully concluded, for the document referring to it is a release, in which the partners absolve each other from all obligations and responsibilities which might have resulted from their former connection. As we shall see later on, the two men continued to have close mutual business relations of a very complex nature, but with less satisfactory results.²¹

In addition to cooperation with equal or proportional responsibilities or those based on imponderables such as the benefit from a partner's social position, partnerships, as alluded to before, served two vital purposes. They provided a dignified form of employment and the most popular means for the investment of capital. These two objectives appear sometimes combined in one and the same relationship.

In an agreement made around 1080, a person known from other documents as working in the caliphal "House of Exchange" invests in a banking business 500 dinars, while his junior partner contributes only 58, yet share in profit and loss with a ratio of 7/24. Otherwise, however, he is entirely subordinate. The senior partner has full disposition of the common capital and directs and supervises all actions of the junior. The latter has no right to sign promissory notes and has no say with regard to the granting of loans. The senior is exempt from the obligation of the oath of the partners. This contract is a typical example of a partnership with employment and possibly also apprenticeship as its main purpose.²²

A similar relationship, albeit without the element of apprenticeship is apparent in an agreement where one partner invests 600 dirhams in a store of drugs and juices and the other only 20. The latter "sits in the store" and does the selling, the former does the buying. Profit and loss are shared equally, but the storekeeper receives a weekly payment of nine dirhams, while his partner "takes out" only four. The difference is regarded as compensation for work. The investor most probably was a wholesale merchant in drugs and juices who had similar contracts with a number of storekeepers.²³

Mere investment was intended in such connections where the conduct of the business was entirely in the hands of the manager. There was no difference in this respect between investment in a store or in a specific business venture, such as the purchase, transport and sale of goods. In a contract for the renewal of a partnership we see a merchant put eighty dinars into a store for an additional year and sharing one-third of the profit or loss. With regard to these the manager was freed of the oath of the partners, but in case of damage to the capital, he had to prove in court that an act of God was involved. During the course of the year the capital could not be retrieved. If the investor wished to withdraw his money at its termination, he had to grant "a period of waiting" of two months—a common term in any business transaction.²⁴

Finally, partnerships could fulfil a function similar in certain respects to that of a modern insurance company. In a contract made during the last third of the eleventh century a scholar gives to his elder minor daughter fifty and to his younger daughter twenty-five dinars, in order to provide them with a trousseau when they would reach maturity. Meanwhile, the money was confided to a merchant in the form of a partnership to which he contributed only five

dinars. Profit was to be shared equally by the merchant and the girls, while the former had to bear $5/12$ and the latter $7/12$ of the losses. The capital itself was insured, being "a deposit of the Court", for which the highest possible form of security, such as a house had to be given. The father had no right to demand the money back or to interfere in any way in the operations of the merchant. In case anything happened to the latter, the rabbinical court, in consultation with three experienced elders and the persons in whose guardianship the girls would be at the time, would hand over the money to another partner. The difference between the amounts given to the two daughters cannot be explained by the Jewish law of primogeniture, which applied to males only. Besides the privileges of the first born, being unknown to Muslim law, had largely fallen into desuetude by that time. The reason for the discrimination certainly was the difference in the age of the two girls. It was expected that by the time the younger girl attained maturity the merchant would have added so much profit to her capital thus it equalled that of her sister, who, it was supposed, would have married many years before.²⁵

While discussing the various objects and specific aims of partnerships we had numerous occasions to give examples of the contributions of the partners as well as their participation in profit and loss and their responsibility for the capital invested. A few additional instances will illustrate the wide range of variations prevailing in this matter. In a partnership consisting in export from Egypt to Syria and import from there, the manager provided approximately one-fourth of the investment ($124\frac{1}{2}$ dinars out of a total of $484\frac{1}{2}$, while the capitalist contributed 360), but shared profit and loss on equal terms with the latter.²⁶ In a similar undertaking, a business trip to Syria, four partners intended to travel together. One of them, when prevented by illness from joining the company, stipulated that losses would be borne by himself and his partners in equal shares, while the latter would take $1/12$ more in profit, the difference being regarded as compensation for their work and their living expenses.²⁷ A merchant travelling to Sicily in the spring of 1058 received from an Egyptian business friend oriental spices and aromatics worth $186\frac{5}{8}$ dinars with a view to sell them in his native island on condition that he shared one-third of profit and loss, as well as the responsibility for the restitution of the capital. Although the contract is expressly called "partnership", the conditions

specified are not in accordance with the usual provisions of either Jewish or Muslim law.³⁸

Actual contracts according to Jewish law, which gives the manager two-thirds of the profit, but makes him responsible for losses, have been found, although they are rare.³⁹ The Muslim "commenda" is more common, in which the manager receives only one-third, but is not responsible for losses, as stated above, and instances where the losses were not borne by the manager are reported. In one case, the investor lost almost fifty out of seventy dinars confided to an overseas trader, but was convinced by "the elders of the community" that he had no claim against him.⁴⁰ In another case, in a "partnership" amounting to one thousand dinars, losses were incurred whereupon the manager claimed to be not a partner but the bearer of a commenda, and therefore not responsible for the losses.⁴¹ A middleman who brought about the connection between the capitalist and the managers could become a member of the partnership. In a query submitted to Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237 A.C.) we read about a store of drugs in which 368 dinars were invested. The capitalist received one-half of the profit, while the middleman and the managers each got one-sixth, the latter having also the additional claim on a daily or weekly remuneration.⁴² The amount of the remuneration is not indicated in the case just described because it was irrelevant for the litigation which formed the object of the query. The sums mentioned in other documents with regard to persons "sitting in the store" are low, varying from 5 dirhams per week to half a dinar (about 18 dirhams at that time). This fact may have its source in the stipulation of Jewish law that the manager receives "the wages of an unemployed", which are defined as the sum which a person would consent to accept for the benefit of having no need to work.⁴³ In one contract, the partners receive their wheat and wine in addition to half a dinar per week.⁴⁴ In another, only the investor (of 200 dinars) received wheat and wine, as well as other living expenses except expenditure on his house and school fees for his boy.⁴⁵

In specific business ventures of limited scope, the manager used to receive his living expenses as well as the expenditure on transport, customs, etc. "out of the midst" (the partnership). This was common Muslim law, as well as a practice reflected in the Geniza record.⁴⁶ In an account written in 1047, the living expenses, designated with the Muslim term *nafaqah* amounted to 22½ dinars

for 14 months, i.e. somewhat less than half a dinar per week (more exactly 0.381 dinar).³⁷

There were, however, also agreements of partnerships, where the manager received one-third of the profit but bore the expenses himself. This usage explains why we find in one court record the investor claiming that the expenses had to be borne by the manager, while the latter declared that they were on the account of the partnership. In another legal document it was first stipulated that the transport of the goods was on account of the traveller, which was changed later on to the condition "all expenses to the midst". Both records concerned the transport of corals, the first from the "West" to Egypt in 1085, the second from Egypt to Jedda, the part of Mecca in 1036.³⁸

In one case we saw the managing partner indemnified by receiving 1/12 more of the profit, while losses were divided equally. Another document refers to a similar arrangement granting the merchant doing the selling a preferential share of 1/6. We had also an agreement into the opposite direction, namely with the profit shared equally, while the manager would have to bear 1/6 less of the loss.³⁹

Normally, a merchant concluded a number of partnerships even with regard to the same commodity or took the same commodity from one business friend on commission and from another on partnership. About such connections with others we read even in letters to most prominent merchants.⁴⁰ On the other hand, it is perhaps natural that there were limitations in this matter. In an unfortunately much mutilated dissolution of a partnership the manager is permitted to trade in the future in the merchandise concerned with others.⁴¹ A Tunisian merchant writes to the husband and son of his sister in Egypt: "All I bought this year is in partnership with you. I did not send anything to anyone else."⁴²

As to the duration of partnerships, joint specific ventures lasted as long as conditioned by their nature—and the goodwill of the manager. In a case of a partnership in ambergris which was transported from Tunisia to Syria and exchanged for brazilwood which in its turn was sold with great profit to European merchants, the operation lasted ten years, when the investor finally brought the manager to court.⁴³ The standard period of a partnership, even in a store, was one year after which it was renewed, if so desired. Special circumstances could induce the parties to contract for two

years or a stretch of time appropriate to the nature of the relationship, as in the case of the capital destined for the trousseau of two minor girls described above. However, even in the latter instance, where the provider of the capital had no right to demand it back, every year accounts had to be submitted to him. In joint business undertakings which often lasted longer than one year, every year accounts were made.⁴⁴

Special conditions attached to a contract of partnership are very prominent in the Geniza records. "I have heard that my partner has gone to Damascus, although I have instructed him not to leave Ramle and that all his selling and buying should be done through Siba', the representative of the merchants"—we read in an old letter.⁴⁵ In a contract written in 1116-17 the two investors allow the manager to do business in the Egyptian Rif and the three seaports, Damietta, Tinnis and Alexandria, but nowhere else (which probably referred to the capital, where the two were active themselves)⁴⁶. In an agreement made approximately at the same time, the manager undertakes to confine his sales and purchases to Aleppo and Antioch and other places in Northern Syria and to sell on cash only, since these were conditions imposed on him by his two partners who provided the capital.⁴⁷ When a manager acted against such stipulations and something happened to the principal, he was held responsible for the whole loss.⁴⁸

Sometimes it was expressly stated that the managing partners were free to act as they saw fit.⁴⁹ Where no such statement was made, it was taken for granted. "I have no right to raise objections against you", writes a merchant in Sicily to his partner in Egypt, "with regard to purchases made by you for our *khulṭah* just as you have no right to remonstrate against my actions here."⁵⁰ It must have been usual in both commercial and industrial partnerships that one contractor granted the other a loan, which the latter wholly or partly invested in the common undertaking. We have such contracts from the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the last one, only 600 out of the 3,000 dirhams received as a loan were put into the partnership.⁵¹

The termination of a partnership was as complicated as its initiation. The following examples, dealing, as several did before, with a store of drugs, may serve as an illustration. One of the partners was a "druggist" and son of a "druggist", the second was the son of a money assayer, while his own profession is not

indicated. The partnership was dissolved under the following conditions :

1. The druggist receives from his partner fourteen dinars, payable in monthly instalments of one dinar.
2. He acknowledges the assessment of the value of the store which was handed over to him.
3. He will pay debts on the partnership to the amount of 800 dirhams. Liabilities in excess of this sum will be borne by the two partners in equal shares.
4. The assets of the partnership belong to the two in equal shares and both will cooperate in collecting them.
5. Sixteen flasks (presumably of rose oil), which had not yet been paid, belonged to the druggist. Any losses with regard to this item will be borne by the two in equal shares.⁵²

Other Geniza records referring to the dissolution of a partnership contain similar arrangements. One, concerning a bank in the Mediterranean port of Damietta, shows that a full six years after the withdrawal of two partners, who had invested 600 dinars, the accounts with at least one of them had not yet been settled.⁵³

Most court records, however, related to these matters are mere releases, i.e. statements to the effect that the parties concerned had no claims any more against each other. Such releases are full of legal verbiage but contain little subject-matter. Clearly, the settlement was made out of court, or before Muslim notaries. Express references to the latter are made in such documents of release with regard to partnerships. This is indeed what we would expect. Since the most common form of legally valid business cooperation was the Muslim commenda, it is only natural that such contracts should be made before a Muslim authority.⁵⁴

2. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

In September 1112, a merchant and his nephew (the son of his sister) appeared before a notary in Old Cairo to renew a family partnership, which had existed for years, but had lacked legal sanction. Each of the two had been used to make transactions and to conclude contracts without the knowledge of the other, sometimes in the name of the contractor only. The two relatives made new accounts, assessed their property and laid down rules for their future cooperation. It is highly instructive to observe under which conditions this informal relation was converted into a formal partnership. The

joint capital, 3,750 dinars, a very respectable sum, belonged to the two in equal shares. The geographical scope of the business was to be very wide, comprising "the West", i.e. the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean west of Egypt, and Egypt itself and the "Yemen", which term was used to encompass the whole trade route to India. The absence of Palestine, Syria and the Hījāz from this list was due to the state of insecurity created in those countries by the advent of the Crusades. As previously, each partner was entitled to act independently of the other, while any commitment incurred by one would be binding on the other, irrespective of the fact whether the document or transaction concerned was made in the name of both or of only one of them. Likewise, all profits obtained by any transaction made by one of the two belonged to the partnership. Unlike previous usage, certain personal expenses would not be borne by the common purse. However, since the uncle had married with money provided by it, the nephew would have the same prerogative when he married. No time-limit was set to this contract.¹

Thus, family partnership was characterized first by its comprehensiveness. Any profit accruing to the relatives from any work done by them belonged to the common purse. Such a stipulation was found by us in a regular partnership only once, but there the contract was for the duration of two years only, and other restrictions were attached to it.²

Secondly, the family partnership was endowed with overriding legal power. Whatever form was given by a partner to his transactions, they equally involved the other members. In conformity with this legal situation we read the following in the will of a merchant who had made his brother sole executor and guardian of his children: "Everything which is registered in my name or the name of my brother or that of us two or in the name of our children, as well as all the pieces of jewelry for the little ones (i.e. the girls for their future trousseaus) and the real estate, the sheep, the orchards and their rights of tax-farming will be divided in equal shares—after payment of the items mentioned before—one-half going to my brother and the other half to my children." Naturally, the dying man would have had no right to make dispositions with regard to the property of his brother and the latter's children had not the overriding power of family partnership been recognized by the authorities with which such property was registered (Muslim or Jewish, or, most probably, both). The partition of the estate was

a legal necessity, for the belongings of minor orphans were under the jurisdiction or at least supervision of the court. *De facto*, however, since the surviving brother was entrusted with the administration of the property of his nephews, as well as with their education (as the will expressly states), he was expected to continue the partnership until it would be formally reinstated when the orphans would come of age.³

In his penetrating study on "Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic", Frederic C. Lane makes the following general statement: "In most societies, at most times, it has been the great family which by its wealth, power, prestige and presumption of permanence has been the outstanding institution in private economic enterprise."⁴ The Geniza world was no exception to this role. During the eleventh century, its trade, which then was still flourishing, was dominated by "the great houses". Of all the more prominent merchants engaged in it, we are able to salvage their family connections from the *debris* of the Geniza. Moreover, from Fez in Morocco to al-Ahwāz in Iran, merchants appear in their letters not only as individuals but also as firms, many letters being addressed to or sent in the names of two or more brothers or a father and his sons. It is indicative of the decline of the trade of the Geniza people in the twelfth century that no such addresses have been traced thus far from the latter period.⁵

A good example for a family business is presented by the Tāhertīs of Qayrawān, for in their case correspondence of or regarding to the head of the family (called Barhūn), his four sons and eight grandsons has been traced. One of his daughters was the mother of Nahray ben Nissim, the great merchant, about whom the Bibliographical Note at the end of this article might be compared. Another daughter was married to the Berechiahs, a leading Qayrawānese family (cf. n. 5), and there were several other such connections. Moreover, the Tāhertīs are repeatedly referred to in the plural as "the sons of the Tāherti"—which by-name designating its bearer as an immigrant Qayrawān from Tāhert, Algeria, was first borne by Barhūn's father. Their prominence in the Geniza remnants was partly due to their sheer number and influence. They are described in a letter written by an opponent as "one band, united by one spirit". On the other hand, the preservation of so much material related to them might have been caused by a merely accidental circumstance. As is evident from one letter, one of

them was in charge of collections made for the Jewish academy of Jerusalem. Thus it is natural that they should have been connected with the synagogue of the Palestinians in Old Cairo where the Geniza chamber was located.⁶

A cursory reading of their comprehensive correspondence conveys the impression that the second generation, the brothers Tāhertī worked together permanently, while the grandsons were connected with each other rather through informal cooperation, strengthened by partnerships contracted for specific business ventures as was the case with other such connections. The brothers divided their work between themselves in such a way that one or two of them, but not always the same, stayed in Egypt for a number of years, while the others were active at their base in Qayrawān and other places in Tunisia or in Spain. In a most detailed account for the year 1024, which was submitted to one of the two brothers then in Egypt, the assets of the latter are kept asunder, while the items belonging to those remaining in Tunisia are lumped together under the heading "for your brothers".⁷

In many cases it is not evident whether partnerships between brothers or between a father and a son referred to in the Geniza records were of a transient or a more permanent character. For such partnerships came before court mostly after the death of one of the participants, when the heirs of the latter had to be satisfied or settlements had to be made with third parties.⁸ In other instances, however, the partnerships between close relatives, like those between the Tāhertīs of the third generation, were clearly limited to specific undertakings and sometimes outsiders were involved in them as well.⁹ Mostly it is not evident from our sources in which way father and son or brothers cooperated in the trade between the eastern and western part of the Mediterranean. We see them acting as a concern on either end of the trade route, but under which arrangement is not revealed.¹⁰

In retail stores and workshops it was perhaps common that brothers and even cousins worked and lived together without formal arrangements. Naturally, we hear about such cases only when something went wrong.¹¹ However, in small business, too, formal partnerships were concluded between close relatives. The following agreement, dated 1181, is particularly illustrative. Two brothers conclude a partnership in a store for a certain period (which is not preserved) with equal share in profit and loss. They will live

together and eat on one table, all the common cost for food to be borne by the store. In addition, each receives one dirham per day. If one brother (it seems the younger one and a bachelor) does not want to partake in his brother's food, he will receive two dirhams per day for living expenses and the latter, four. The preferential treatment of one brother most probably was due to the fact that he was the master and the other, the apprentice.¹²

At the root of the family partnership in those days was the mutual responsibility in which parents and children and brothers and sisters were held by both state and society. There is ample opportunity to study this practice with regard to the payment of the poll-tax. The situation was similar in the world of commerce. When a man went broke in Old Cairo, his father, a high community official, had to go into hiding.¹³ Once a wine merchant travelled to Aden in South Arabia after having sold bad wine. His father was brought to court, but could not be convicted since, according to law, a father was not responsible for his son's debts. However, "righteous elders" intervened, and the old man paid the whole sum demanded by his son's customers.¹⁴ Conversely, we find a member of a prominent Damascene family and business firm granting a release to the sister of a former partner of his, confirming that she was not responsible for any liabilities resulting from his connections with her brother.¹⁵

Joint responsibility was the basis of family partnership, but did not lead to it automatically. The general impression conveyed by the Geniza records is that the members of a family usually worked together, but preferred to keep their accounts separate. *Taḥābabū wa-taḥāsabū*, "love each other, but make accounts with each other" is a principle recommended in a saying widely diffused in the Arab world. While the existence of big family business is well attested in the Geniza, especially for the eleventh century, the complete and long range pooling together of resources, as we have found in the document from the year 1112 and in the will discussed at the beginning of this sub-section, seem to have been the exception rather than the rule.

NOTES

1. *Partnership and Commenda*

1. See *A Mediterranean Society*, Chapter II (2) and *ibid.*, n. 30.
2. *Ibid.*, Chapter III F.
3. Maimonides, *Responsa*, pp. 38 and 45. 'Isqā simply means "dealings", but had assumed the specific meaning of the contract described in our text. The expression *qirād betōrat 'isqā*, which in reality contains a contradiction, is mentioned in JTS EN Adler 2727 (*Qirād*). The opposite expression, namely *'isqā 'alā ḥukm al-qirād*, is found in a contract of commenda dated 1215/6, UL Cambridge Or. 1080 J 137, line 12 [India book 161].
4. Maimonides, *Responsa* p. 148. The text states that the Muslim *qirād* was particularly common in contracts referring to oversea trade. Other instances *ibid.*, pp. 120 and 676.
5. TS 12,670, verso, line 7: *sekhar 'amālō umzōnō*, cf. Mishna, B. Meš'a 5 : 4. Vienna, Erzherzog Rainer 22, lines 21, 23 and 25: *sekhar ṭorḥō wa'amālō*. The same in JTS EN Adler 4010 [India book 157], verso, lines 11-12.
6. *The Code of Maimonides*, Book Twelve, translated by Isaac Klein, New Haven 1951, p. 222 (Treatise IV: Agents and Partners, chapter V, para. 1). A good summary of the Jewish law of partnership and *'isqa*, including medieval developments, is contained in E. E. Hildesheimer, *Das jüdische Gesellschaftsrecht*, Leipzig 1930. For the relation of the commenda and its Muslim counterpart, cf. Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, New York, 1955, p. 24, note 31, and p. 174 ff., H. R. Idris, "Commerce maritime et *kirād* en Berberie Orientale", *JESHO* 4 (1961), pp. 225-39; A. L. Udovitch, "At the Origins of the Western Commenda," *Speculum* 27 (1962), pp. 198-207. These two articles contain further bibliographical information. Mr. Udovitch prepares also a book on the Muslim law of partnership in general. Meanwhile, the article *Shirka* in *EI*¹ (Heffening) and Bergsträsser-Schacht, *Grundzüge des Islamischen Rechts*, Berlin 1935, pp. 74-6, may be compared.
7. The quotation is from TS 8 J 11, f. 14, lines 11-12. Only the right half of this manuscript is preserved. Thus, the original contained twice as many phrases to the same effect.
8. Bergsträsser-Schacht (see n. 6), p. 74.
9. TS Box J 1, f. 1.
10. Oxford, Bodleian MS. Heb. a 2 (Catalogue 2805), f. 18 [N 44].
11. Maimonides, *Responsa*, p. 37.
12. TS 20.96, verso, line 20.
13. See Chapter VI A 2 and *ibid.*, nn. 15-17.
14. TS 8 J 11, f. 14, cf. note 7. By a ridiculous coincidence also the names of the contractors of this model partnership were identical, both being called Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā (Abraham, son of Moses), with the difference that one was from Majorca, while the name of the locality from which the second partner hailed is not preserved.
15. Oxford, Bodleian MS. Heb. a 2 (Catalogue 2805), f. 16, line 16. TS 12.250, line 8.

16. JTS EN Adler 4010 [India book no. 158]. See also *A Mediterranean Society*, Chapter III, sub-section C.

17. TS 8 J 32, f. 3 verso, line 7 : *al-'aybah alladhī yaduhu wa yaḏ sharikuhu fiha fi 'l-shīl wa'l ḥaṭṭ* (dated 1162).

18. Jerusalem, Hebrew University Library, Geniza MS. 83 b. (dated 1132). Translated in *Readings*.

19. TS 16.170 (dated 1095). The document is incomplete and one line contains the statement "Mr. So and So sells and buys with me", but the wording of the preceding and following lines, as well as the room left in the same line after the statement quoted does not allow to assume that the person referred to (known from other documents as a respectable "trustee of the court") substituted for Amram during his absence.

20. TS 28.17. The weekly emolument is called here *muwāqafah* which is *muwāfaqah*, "agreement, the sum agreed upon." Lines 27-8 seem to imply that the notable invested money in the brothers' business.

21. U L Cambridge Or. 1080 J 73.

22. TS 12.784. Translated in *Readings*.

23. TS 12.670 (November 29, 1228). Translated in *Readings*.

24. U L Cambridge Or. 1080 J 121 (around 1075).

25. TS 12.461. The scholar is known from a number of dated manuscripts, among them TS 20.110, a partnership in a weaver's workshop to which he provided the money.

26. TS 16.87 (Spring 1097).

27. TS 8 J 6, f. 9 (July 4, 1231). This is the draft of the contract, translated in *Readings*. TS NS J 268 contains the notes taken by the notary on the same day in the same matter. The expression "compensation for their work and living expenses" is in Hebrew, cf. above, n. 5.

28. TS 12.5 and 20.152. By "loss" possibly loss on the profit made is meant.

29. E.g. JTS EN Adler 2727 (Qirād), where the contract is called 'isqā, c.f. above n. 3.

30. TS 13 J 2, f. 5 (dated 1095). The commenda is called here *muḏārabah*.

31. Gottheil-Worrell, Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Free Gallery, VII, p. 34, line 11 : *wadda'a annuh muqāriḍ lā sharik*. The text is full of mis-readings and ridiculous translations. The essence of the document is that all depositions by the claimant before Muslim or Jewish clerks in this matter were made under duress and void and that only documents signed by the Nezer (read 'l-nzr in line 20, for 'l-nzh) Nathan b. Samuel were valid.

32. British Museum MS. Or. 5563 D, publ. in Abraham Maimuni *Responsa*, pp. 207-09.

33. Five dirhams, cf. n. 23. Half a dinar: n. 20. For the concept of "the wages of unemployed", cf. E. E. Hildesheimer, *Gesellschaftsrecht* (see n. 6), pp. 97, 112, 119.

34. In the contract quoted in n. 18. Wine as a main constituent of the daily diet is an ancient Mediterranean tradition, as is still to be observed in countries like France, Italy and Greece.

35. Mosseri A 17. The contract is called here *mu'āmalah*, but the word is also used loosely for partnership. The words 'suknuhu fī dārihi' could perhaps

mean also: his rent.

36. E.g., TS NS J 6, lines 9, 15 and 16. JTS EN Adler 4010 [India book 158], cf. above n. 2.

37. Oxford, Bodleian MS. Heb. e 98, fol. 64 a, line 6, where the Muslim *nafaqah* is used. Cf. above, p. 26.

38. TS 16.203, lines 7-8, JTS EN Adler 4010 [India book 158].

39. Above, n. 27. Secondly, the second source quoted in n. 4. Thirdly, n. 25. In the originals the fractions are given in *qirāts* or $1/24$ s. For managers working gratuitously as an act of piety, cf. *A Mediterranean Society*, Ch. VIII (Old Age).

40. E.g., TS 12.291, lines 12-13 and 14-16 (addressed to Ibn 'Awkal, a most prominent Cairine merchant, active at the beginning of the eleventh century.

41. TS 28.6 B. The contract referred perhaps partly to a workshop.

42. TS 20.127, line 33.

43. Oxford, Bodleian MS. Heb. c 28 (Catalogue 2876), f. 11, and d 66 (Catalogue 2878), f. 5, which refer to the same affair (dated 1085).

44. Cf. above nn. 18, 21, 24, 25 and 37. The contract referred to in n. 35 does not contain any limitation in time. However, the document is not a legal instrument but a memo. made by the manager for his own use, presumably as a draft for a contract.

45. Oxford, Bodleian MS. Heb. 611 (Catalogue 2874), f. 8, publ. MJ II 29.

46. U L Cambridge Or. 1081 J 36.

47. TS NS J 6, lines 10-13.

48. As reported in a query submitted to Maimonides, *Responsa*, pp. 41 and 150-51.

49. E.g., in the sources quoted in n. 27.

50. Philadelphia, Dropsie College 389, line 83.

51. (a) The source quoted in n. 16 (dated 1038). (b) Industrial contract no. IX (dated 1134) in *A Mediterranean Society*, Chapter II (2), n. 30. (c) U L Cambridge 1080 J 280 verso (around 1230).

52. TS 13 J 3, f. 27 (July 1218).

53. E.g., U L Cambridge. Or. 1080 J 288 (December 1153, Left half torn away). The bank of Damietta: TS 13 J 6, f. 5.

54. TS 16.138 (Alexandria, August 1077): *shirkah be 'ede goyim*. Hebrew 'ed "witness", is a translation of the Islamic term 'adl, "trustworthy witness, notary".

2. Family Partnerships

1. TS Box 28, f. 263 [India book 212], translated in *Readings*.

2. Cf. above, note 21.

3. TS 20.99. This interesting will is much mutilated and effaced. According to the names mentioned and known from other documents, it must have been written late in the eleventh century.

4. *Journal of Economic History*, 4 (1944), p. 178.

5. Fez: Abraham and Tanhūm, sons of Jacob, TS 12.829, publ. MT I, pp. 123-26 (February 1007). This firm was entrusted with the transfer of donations from Morocco to the Jewish academies in Baghdad, cf. *ibid.*, p. 125.

lines 15-16. Two Tāhertī brothers of Qayrawān write to the three Tustarīs in Old Cairo, TS 12.133. Three Tāhertī brothers in Qayrawān address Ibn 'Awkal and his two elder sons in Old Cairo, U L Cambridge 1080 J 248. In a later letter, he and his three sons are addressed, British Museum Or. 5542, f. 15. A generation earlier, he and his father formed one firm, TS 12.383. The brothers Berechiah of Qayrawān, who were intermarried with the Tāhertīs, sent the letters TS 12.175, TS 13 J 36, f. 1, and TS 12.250. A letter from a firm in al-Ahwāz, addressed to the three Tustarīs, is preserved in TS 13 J 25, f. 18. The letter contains a reference to a third firm, the sons of Zakkariyā'. An early letter to the three Tustarīs is found in TS 8 J 36, f. 2.

6. Cf. S. D. Goitein, "La Tunisie du XI^e siècle à la lumière des documents de la Geniza du Caire", *Lévi-Provençal Memorial Volume*, Paris 1962, pp. 566-8, where, however, Barhūn's daughter is referred to erroneously as the wife of Nahray b. Nissim. She was the wife of his father (i.e. his mother or step-mother?). The article speaks about five instead of four brothers because at the time of its writing the identity of Mūsā and Abu 'l-Khayr, both names being referred to as borne by a son of Barhūn, was not yet established. *Uṣbah wāḥidah wa kalimatuhum wāḥidah* TS 12.128, lines 11-12. Collection for the Jerusalem Academy: U L Cambridge 1081 J 24, verso, line 2. See also the preceding note.

7. In Oxford Bodleian MS. Heb. d. 65 (Catalogue 2877), f. 9, lines 15, 24 and 34, published ATaS, pp. 179-80, the brothers Ismā'il and Abu'l-Khayr (Mūsā) are in Egypt, while Abu'l-Faḍl Ṣāliḥ is in Spain. In several other letters these two brothers are referred to as being in Egypt, while their wives and children are still in Tunisia. In U L Cambridge Or. 1080 J 248, Ṣāliḥ is in Qayrawān, but in 1080 J 35 he is in Egypt together with Ismā'il. In David Kaufmann Collection 13, line 17, Abū Surtūr Isaac is on his way to Egypt. Thus, each of the four brothers was at one time in that country. The account of 1024: U L Cambridge J 291.

8. E.g. TS 20.21 (April 1076). Release of a man who had owed 145½ dinars to a partnership, perhaps permanent, between a father and a son. TS 16.255 (some twenty or twenty-five years later. Complaint against a representative of the merchants who did not settle the accounts of a partnership between two brothers, one of whom who had died). TS 12.651 (January-February 1130. Settlement after the death of a brother, who was also a partner, with the latter's daughter and wife).

9. E.g. David Kaufmann Collection 13, line 13 (partnership of writer with his brother and Ibn 'Awkal). TS 20.76, lines 16-17 (several partnerships with a brother in different specified commodities).

10. E.g. David Kaufmann Collection (Second Series) XV, lines 13, 23, verso line 6. (Three brothers cooperating in Qayrawān and Old Cairo.)

11. Maimonides, *Responsa*, pp. 150 and 155. (The two queries refer perhaps to the same case; one and three cousins respectively who continued the actual partnerships of their fathers, sharing work, domicile and food.)

12. TS 10 J 4, f. 7.

13. TS 13 J 19, f. 6, line 18; *al-ḥazzān algādol* (the chief cantor) *mukhtaṭṭāṭ mājra 'bnihi 'nkasar* (because of the mishap of the bankruptcy of his son).

14. TS 12.587 (June 1178).

15. TS 28.7 (April 1060). Despite its sixty-three lines, the document does not reveal the circumstances of the case. The brother is not described as dead. The name of the Damascene family: Ibn Ḥirbīsh.

3. *Bibliographical Note*

The manuscripts are quoted according to the cities and collections, in which they are preserved, and the signs used by the latter. Note the following abbreviations:

- TS** : Taylor-Schechter Collection, preserved in the University Library, Cambridge, England.
- U L Cambridge** : Other collections of Geniza papers in the same library.
- Mishna** : First codex of post-biblical Jewish law, concluded around 200 A. D. referred to in the Ḥadīth as *mathnāt*.
- Talmud** : The totality of authoritative Jewish legal writings, including the Mishna, canonized around 500. Both the Mishna and the Talmud as a whole are available in English translations.
- Maimonides** : R. Moses b. Maimon Responsa, ed. J. Blau, Jerusalem 1957-1961. Responsa correspond to Muslim *fatāwā*.
- India Book** : A Collection of 315 Geniza documents on the India trade prepared by the present writer for publication.
- A Mediterranean Society** : *A Mediterranean Society, The Jewish Communities of the Arab World, as portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, a three-volume book prepared by the present writer. (Two volumes completed.)
- Readings** : *Readings in Mediterranean Social History*, Selected Documents from the Cairo Geniza translated in English by S. D. Goitein (to be published soon.)
- N** : Geniza records connected with Nahray ben Nissim, a Qayrawānese merchant, scholar and public figure, who emigrated to Egypt, where he lived between 1045 and 1096. Prepared for publication by Mr. M. Michael.

The writer wishes to express his thanks to the libraries whose manuscripts have been used in this article.

Artisans en Méditerranée orientale au haut moyen âge

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Artisans en Méditerranée orientale au haut moyen âge *

Objectif et méthode *.

Cette étude a pour base principale les documents de la *Gêniza* du Caire : immense trésor de contrats, d'actes de tribunaux, de lettres et de comptes, s'échelonnant du ^x^e au ^{xiii}^e siècles, et conservés à l'origine dans une synagogue de Fustât, ou le Vieux Caire ¹. La plupart des personnages mentionnés dans ces documents sont des Juifs. Aussi le titre général que nous donnons à cet article nécessite-t-il une explication. Comme nous le montrerons, il n'existait alors en Égypte ni ghetto professionnel ni ghetto physique : pas de concentration forcée de Chrétiens ou de Juifs dans des quartiers séparés. Certes, chaque groupe socio-religieux avait jusqu'à un certain point une préférence pour des professions déterminées (comme c'est encore le cas aujourd'hui pour quelques minorités aux États-Unis), mais sans qu'il y eût de cloisons étanches entre les métiers. Ainsi donc, compte tenu des réserves qui seront exprimées plus loin, les documents de la *Gêniza* se rapportant aux artisans

* NOTE BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE. — Les manuscrits sont cités d'après les villes et les collections où ils sont conservés et avec les cotes des collections. A noter les abréviations suivantes :

TS : Taylor-Schechter Collection, conservée à la Bibliothèque de l'Université, Cambridge, Angleterre.

ULCambridge : Autres collections de documents de la *Gêniza* à la même bibliothèque.
Mediterranean Society : *A Mediterranean Society of the High Middle Ages, based on Records from the Cairo Geniza*, livre en préparation de l'auteur.

Readings : *Readings in Mediterranean Social History*, Documents choisis de la *Gêniza* du Caire, traduits en anglais par l'auteur (en préparation).

L'auteur tient à exprimer ses remerciements sincères aux directeurs et aux conservateurs des bibliothèques dont il a utilisé les manuscrits dans cette étude.

1. Au sujet de la *Gêniza* du Caire. Cf. S. D. GOITEIN, « L'état actuel de la recherche sur les documents de la *Gêniza* du Caire », *Revue des Etudes juives*, I (CXVIII), 1959-60, pp. 9-27, où se trouvent d'autres indications bibliographiques. Voir aussi la note bibliographique ci-dessus.

reflètent-ils non seulement les conditions de vie des Juifs, mais celles de tous les autres artisans de l'époque ¹.

On pourrait penser, en outre, du fait que ces documents ont été trouvés en Égypte, qu'ils n'ont valeur de témoignage que pour cette région. Cependant ce serait une erreur de les considérer comme se référant exclusivement au pays où ils ont été découverts. La mobilité des gens de l'époque était stupéfiante. Les documents de la Gëniza nous parlent d'artisans venus d'Espagne, du Maroc, de Byzance, de Palestine, du Liban, d'Irak, d'Iran et même de Tiflis (aujourd'hui Tbilisi, en Géorgie).

Beaucoup d'autres indications attestent encore le caractère international des arts et des métiers. Ce n'est que lorsque nous pouvons montrer que telle branche d'industrie était spécifiquement égyptienne que nous sommes en droit de considérer un document de la Gëniza comme se rapportant à des conditions de vie strictement locales. Nous avons aussi utilisé les manuels arabes relatifs à la surveillance des marchés, qui sont la source musulmane la plus importante sur les travailleurs à cette époque, de même que d'autres sources littéraires sur ce sujet, mais seulement pour vérifier ou corriger les documents de la Gëniza que nous présentons.

Les recherches sur l'histoire sociale de l'Islam n'en sont encore qu'à leurs débuts ; et la meilleure méthode semble être, pour chaque spécialiste, de donner un exposé aussi complet que possible des sources auxquelles il a accès, remettant à plus tard les tentatives de synthèses fondées sur une série d'études analogues.

Division du travail et spécialisation.

Nous ne traiterons pas ici des aspects techniques de l'industrie médiévale dans le bassin méditerranéen, les ayant récemment étudiés ailleurs ¹. Quelques-uns d'entre eux requièrent cependant une attention spéciale, car ils ont eu une très grande importance dans la vie sociale des travailleurs.

A cet égard, le haut degré de spécialisation et de division du travail qui se reflète dans les documents de la Gëniza est très impressionnant. Jusqu'à présent, on y a dénombré environ 265 arts et métiers différents ². Or les artisans, contrairement aux marchands, n'avaient guère besoin d'entretenir une correspondance professionnelle et encore moins l'occasion d'établir des contrats par écrit ou de comparaître devant les tribunaux. On peut donc penser que le nombre réel des professions était, en

1. « The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area as Reflected in the Records of the Cairo Gëniza », *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 4, 1961, pp. 168-197.

2. L'article cité dans la note précédente mentionne, p. 168, 210 professions manuelles ; mais depuis qu'il a été rédigé j'ai eu l'occasion d'examiner des centaines de documents inédits de la Gëniza. De là vient cette différence.

fait, encore plus élevé. Des 24 métiers qui donnèrent leurs noms à des bazars (dans la description du Caire de Maqrizī), 11 n'ont pas encore été rencontrés par nous dans les documents de la Gēniza, bien qu'il ne soit pas douteux qu'ils aient existé à l'époque ¹. Dans son étude sur les « corporations » d'artisans à Damas au XII^e siècle, Nikita Elisséeff énumère 51 emplacements qui ont des noms de métiers ; 15 d'entre eux ne sont pas mentionnés dans les documents sur lesquels porte cette étude. Les manuels de surveillance des marchés, contemporains des documents de la Gēniza, font ressortir une divergence analogue ².

La raison de cette extrême division du travail semble être que chaque produit fini requerrait un spécialiste pour sa fabrication. Ainsi la cordonnerie nous apparaît, d'après les documents de la Gēniza, comme un métier réparti entre plusieurs artisans spécialisés ; un document mentionne en même temps trois sortes de cordonniers ; et il en existait au moins deux autres sortes, correspondant aux divers types de chaussures alors en vogue. Il y avait encore beaucoup d'autres métiers du cuir ; outre les selliers, on peut citer, par exemple, les fabricants d'outres en cuir, qui avaient un bazar à eux dans le Vieux Caire, car en l'absence de produits synthétiques, les outres et sacs en cuir de tous genres étaient alors beaucoup plus répandus qu'aujourd'hui. De même, chaque foyer possédait au moins une peau, joliment décorée, qu'on étalait sous la table basse mobile, servant au repas. La préparation des peaux pour cet usage particulier était un métier en soi.

Dans une région où le bois était rare et où l'on utilisait très peu de meubles en bois, on pourrait croire que la profession de charpentier était peu représentée ; pourtant elle comportait, à l'époque, au moins cinq métiers différents : les charpentiers proprement dits, faisant surtout la charpente dans les constructions ; les scieurs, mentionnés en règle générale, dans les comptes des constructions avant les charpentiers (le bois était scié aux dimensions voulues sur le lieu de la construction) ; les constructeurs de coffres et les tourneurs (ces derniers avaient dans le Vieux Caire des bazars à leur nom) ; enfin, les fabricants de serrures en bois, d'une importance particulière, puisque d'eux dépendaient « la sécurité des biens et la garde des femmes ».

Parmi les teinturiers, il y avait ceux qui se spécialisaient pour une étoffe et pour certaines substances colorantes ; ils teignaient la laine en différentes nuances de violet ou bien coloraient la soie en bleu turquoise ou cramoisi. Il y avait des spécialistes pour les couteaux, les louches et cuillers, les pinces, les crochets (comme en boucherie), les rasoirs, les aiguilles et autres objets du même genre. Chacune de ces professions

1. Maqrizī, *Khitat*, Būlāq 1270-1853, II, pp. 94-106.

2. N. ELISSÉEFF, « Corporations de Damas sous Nūr al-Dīn », *Arabica*, 3, 1956, pp. 61-79. Les documents de la Gēniza et les sources littéraires citées emploient des termes un peu différents.

portait un nom particulier. Des détails supplémentaires trouvés dans nos sources permettent d'affirmer que ces spécialistes étaient réellement les fabricants de ces articles et non pas simplement des marchands qui en faisaient commerce ¹.

Il y avait aussi les métiers dont il n'existe pas d'équivalents actuels. Ainsi, on utilisait de la sciure, au lieu de sable, pour sécher l'encre d'une page fraîchement écrite (et, de fait, on en a trouvé entre les pages de manuscrits arabes au Moyen Âge) ; aussi, le nom de famille de « scieurier » désigne-t-il, selon toute apparence, un homme qui pouvait gagner sa vie en rassemblant, manipulant et vendant de la sciure. Dans beaucoup de contrats de mariage, on voit mentionné, parmi les articles du « trousseau », le petit bâton avec lequel on appliquait sur les yeux le kohl, ou collyre (maquillage de l'œil), et qui était souvent taillé dans une matière précieuse : cristal, or ou argent. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que la fabrication de bâtons de kohl ait été un métier en soi. On pourrait facilement citer d'autres exemples de ces petits métiers.

Cette spécialisation très poussée avait des incidences différentes selon les professions. Pour certains métiers, elle limitait l'habileté et les connaissances techniques requises à un minimum (comme pour l'ouvrier d'une usine moderne qui travaille à une chaîne d'assemblage). Pour d'autres, elle donnait l'occasion d'atteindre à la plus haute perfection. Nous admirons encore le travail délicat exécuté sur tels spécimens de métal, de céramique, de bois, ou de tissus qui nous sont parvenus. Du fait des différences importantes dans la valeur de la matière première et dans le raffinement des techniques exigées par les divers métiers, les artisans de cette époque ne peuvent en aucune façon être considérés comme formant une classe sociale unifiée. Nous parviendrons à des conclusions analogues lorsque nous examinerons les aspects économiques de ces professions.

La localisation de chaque corps de métier était-elle d'un usage répandu ?

Il a déjà été fait allusion à la concentration topographique des diverses professions. Les documents de la Gêziza contiennent un nombre considérable de précisions à ce sujet. Ils mentionnent par exemple : une ruelle des Fabricants d'Outres en Cuir ; un passage des « Amandeurs » (fabricants de sucreries contenant des amandes) ; une rue et une Porte des Tourneurs (Porte de l'ancienne forteresse byzantine du Vieux Caire à laquelle la rue a donné son nom) ; également un Bazar des Tapissiers, ou une Place des Parfumeurs. Cependant, on désignait en général les concentrations d'artisans sans préciser s'il s'agissait d'un passage, d'une rue, d'un

1. Pour ces détails et les suivants, cf. l'article cité dans la note précédente. Fabricant de peaux : *nattā* c dans U.L. Cambridge, or 1080 J 79 (N 229). Fabricant de pinces : *zanājilī*. Cette profession avait une rue à elle (TS, K 6, f. 118 b).

bazar, etc... Ainsi, on disait : « Nous nous sommes rencontrés aux Cuivriers » ; « je logeais aux Cuisiniers de lentilles » ; « cette rue mène aux Fabricants de Coffres et aux Vendeurs de Sesban » (herbe locale encore couramment utilisée) ; « au coin des fourreurs et du petit bazar des tanneurs... » (ce détail se rapporte à Alep en Syrie) ; etc...

On peut glaner de tels détails dans les actes juridiques qui concernent les maisons changeant de propriétaires par suite de vente, dons ou héritage. Assez souvent, ils recoupent des indications que fournissent les sources littéraires. Pourtant il est douteux que l'ensemble de ces matériaux puisse nous permettre d'esquisser la géographie économique du Vieux Caire, du moins telle qu'elle s'était développée au ^{XII}^e siècle, car il semble qu'à cette époque, la localisation des corps de métier n'était soumise à aucune règle coercitive. Selon un contrat d'association daté de 1125, on fabriquait du verre dans un local situé dans le bazar des fabricants de cuivre, qui avait préalablement servi de magasin de vente de récipients en cuivre. Un autre contrat d'association, daté de 1104, montre que l'on vendait de l'huile de lin, des olives et du jus de citron dans un magasin sis à la Porte des Tanneurs. Deux dépositions faites en justice, l'une en décembre 1081 et l'autre à peu près à la même époque, nous apprennent que des Vérificateurs autorisés des monnaies avaient leur siège dans la rue des Alchimistes. Un médecin avait son cabinet dans un magasin « au bout des Fabricants de Cire » (1143) et un marchand de tissus tenait boutique dans la rue des Qushāshīyin, vendeurs de diverses sortes de pailles (1148).

Dans un contrat daté d'octobre 1194, une fondation pieuse louait le rez-de-chaussée d'une de ses maisons à condition que le locataire n'y fabriquât ni eau de rose, ni litharge (oxyde de plomb fréquemment mentionné à la Gēniza), ni arsenic, ni aucun autre produit nécessitant l'usage du feu, preuve que les mêmes locaux pouvaient être utilisés pour des métiers aussi différents que la fabrication des parfums et la manipulation du plomb ou de l'arsenic. Dans une requête soumise à Abraham Maïmonide, nagid, ou chef, de la communauté juive d'Égypte, le plaignant affirme que son voisin avait converti une maison d'un quartier résidentiel en teinturerie et que la fumée de sa cheminée abimait toute la laine et la toile qu'il exposait (vers 1220). S'il avait existé des règlements de police fixes sur la localisation des différents métiers, le Nagid n'aurait pas jugé l'affaire selon la loi juive. De même, lorsqu'on voit un manuel espagnol du ^{XII}^e siècle sur la surveillance des marchés insister fortement pour que chaque métier se cantonne à l'emplacement précis qui lui a été assigné, on peut être sûr que la réalité était toute différente ¹.

1. Les manuscrits de la Gēniza et les *Responsa* d'Abraham Maïmonide cités ici sont étudiés dans *A Mediterranean Society of the High Middle Ages*, chapitre II, section 2. Pour le manuel sur la réglementation des marchés, cf. E. LÉVI-PROVENÇAL, *Séville musulmane au début du XII^e siècle*, Paris, 1947, p. 95. Texte arabe dans *Journal*

La concentration topographique des métiers remonte à une lointaine antiquité et répondait alors, comme plus tard, à des besoins à la fois techniques et administratifs : elle facilitait aux autorités la surveillance de ces artisans ¹. Cependant, ce qui est révélateur de l'économie libre des XI^e et XII^e siècles, c'est que le contrôle gouvernemental, sur ce point comme sur beaucoup d'autres, se soit montré quelque peu relâché.

Préférences confessionnelles pour certaines professions ; mais pas de ghetto professionnel.

La liberté dans le choix de la profession était un autre aspect de cette économie libre. A part quelques exceptions, rares et insignifiantes, comme l'interdiction aux Musulmans de vendre du porc et du vin, les Chrétiens et les Juifs n'étaient assujettis à aucune restriction dans leurs activités économiques. Les instructions aux Musulmans, que l'on trouve dans le manuel espagnol cité plus haut, leur interdisant de travailler pour des membres des minorités religieuses dans des emplois de caractère servile, prouvent seulement que c'était là chose courante. ²

La Gēniza mentionne au moins 250 professions manuelles exercées par les Juifs, indice certain de la liberté des professions, due non seulement à la loi musulmane, mais encore à la structure sociale de cette époque et en particulier à l'absence de corporations organisées de façon rigide (voir plus loin).

Néanmoins il apparaît clairement, dans la Gēniza, que les différents groupes socio-religieux avaient de nettes préférences pour tels ou tels métiers. Ainsi les Juifs dominaient apparemment dans certaines branches d'industrie, ou, du moins, la pratique de certains arts et métiers était particulièrement répandue dans la communauté juive.

Par exemple, en ce qui concerne les tissus, branche d'industrie qui occupe le premier rang au Moyen Age, les Juifs se spécialisaient dans tous les aspects du travail de la soie, depuis le démêlement des cocons jusqu'au tissage et à la teinture. L'industrie de la soie comportait de nombreuses ramifications et était extrêmement spécialisée et nous y trouvons des Juifs dans tous les pays de la Méditerranée, y compris la Byzance chrétienne. Corrélativement, le commerce de la soie, tant de la matière première que des produits manufacturés, était un des principaux objets de l'activité commerciale juive. Mais le lin, tout aussi important que la soie dans le commerce juif local et international, n'attirait pas beaucoup les Juifs, du moins dans les derniers stades de sa manufacture. Ils se chargeaient

Asiatique 224 (1934), p. 233, ll. 9-10, et *Documents arabes... sur la vie... en Occident musulman...* I, Le Caire 1955.

1. Cf. Bruno MEISSNER, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, I, Heidelberg 1920, p. 231.

2. Cf. Antoine FATTAL, *Le statut légal des non-Musulmans en pays d'Islam*, Beyrouth 1958, pp. 144-160. E. LÉVI-PROVENÇAL, *Séville musulmane* (cf. note 7), p. 108, paragraphe 153.

de sa transformation depuis le moment de sa récolte jusqu'à sa préparation pour l'exportation. Le tissage du lin, du moins en ses aspects les plus artistiques, semble donc avoir été surtout l'apanage des Chrétiens de l'endroit.

La teinture et les autres procédés destinés à donner à un tissu une apparence particulière, comme l'irisation, le cati et le scintillement, étaient une spécialité vraiment juive, comme l'attestent des centaines de références prises à la Gēniza. Des sources musulmanes mentionnent même, en ce domaine, des secrets connus des seuls Juifs. On trouve, en effet, les matières tinctoriales en tête de liste du commerce juif tant dans les pays de l'Océan indien que dans ceux de la Méditerranée. De même la préparation de drogues et d'herbes médicinales était dans une grande mesure une profession juive. Les documents de la Gēniza montrent l'ampleur du commerce, tant local qu'international, dont ces produits étaient l'objet.

Le travail du métal sous toutes ses formes est mentionné dans la Gēniza, surtout l'orfèvrerie et la fabrication de la monnaie califale. Une autre spécialité juive était la fabrication du verre et des récipients en verre.

Comment expliquer cette spécialisation professionnelle des groupes ? D'abord, naturellement, parce qu'en général les fils adoptaient la profession de leurs pères. Or le groupe socio-religieux se compose de familles étendues, dont chacune se spécialise dans une profession transmise de génération en génération. Cependant, il faut tenir compte aussi des circonstances particulières qui amenèrent les groupes à adopter telles professions (bien qu'à cet égard beaucoup de problèmes resteront peut-être toujours sans solution). Ainsi le travail de la soie a pu devenir populaire parmi les Juifs parce qu'il existait déjà de la soie en Palestine, ou bien par suite des contacts établis très tôt entre les marchands juifs et la Chine. Pour le verre, qui était aussi un ancien produit de Palestine, on pourrait proposer une explication analogue. Il semble cependant qu'il faille chercher la cause principale de cette spécialisation dans le fait que les Juifs peuple très dispersé et souvent nouveau-venu dans un pays, formaient un groupe faible du point de vue socio-économique ; ils devaient donc se contenter des professions trop dures pour faire l'objet d'une concurrence, ou bien se diriger vers les secteurs d'activités économiques encore libres ou occupés seulement en partie par les populations locales. Ainsi la fabrication du verre ou de la monnaie (travail des métaux en fusion) ou bien la teinture exigeaient un travail continu près du feu et devaient ne pas être très recherchés sous un climat chaud et dans les conditions primitives de travail de l'époque ¹. Les Juifs pouvaient adopter l'industrie

1. Le Dr. Richard ETTINGHAUSEN, conservateur en chef de l'Art du Proche-Orient à la Freer Gallery à Washington, m'a suggéré le premier cette explication alors que nous discutons de la place dominante que tenait l'industrie du verre dans les documents de la Gēniza.

de la soie car sa nouveauté relative la libérait des vieilles traditions, à l'inverse des industries anciennes du lin, de la laine et du coton. Une autre raison les faisait apprécier comme orfèvres et pour le travail du monnayage royal, car on préférerait le leur confier plutôt qu'aux membres des groupes plus puissants qui, en cas de fraude ou vol, étaient soutenus par leurs clans et leurs parents ¹.

Professions méprisées.

Faut-il penser que la majorité méprisait et évitait les professions où dominait un groupe minoritaire ? Rien dans nos sources ne nous permet de l'affirmer. Dans sa thèse de doctorat sur les métiers et l'origine socio-économique des savants religieux dans l'Islam pendant les 470 premières années de son existence, M. Hayyim J. Cohen dénombre 55 musulmans orfèvres ou travaillant à la monnaie, 22 fabricants de verre et de récipients en verre et 131 fabricants et marchands de soie. Les parfumeurs, avec 443 représentants, constituent, après les drapiers, la profession semi-manuelle la plus répandue dans la classe moyenne musulmane et juive. Même la teinture est représentée par 23 érudits qui portent le nom de cette profession ².

La Loi islamique mentionne des professions méprisables qui ne permettent pas à leurs membres d'épouser une fille de bonne famille ni même d'être admis comme témoins au tribunal. La plupart de ces professions, par exemple celles de « ventouseur », garçon de bains, égoutier, vidangeur, balayeur des rues, n'apparaissent jamais à la Gēniza, alors qu'on aurait pu s'attendre à les trouver mentionnées sur les nombreuses listes de pauvres qu'assistait la communauté juive. Une source juridique musulmane note que les tisserands, qui appartiennent aussi à cette catégorie (comme le Talmud le mentionne déjà), étaient tenus à Alexandrie pour des gens respectables. Ceci était certainement vrai à l'époque de la Gēniza ³.

Des sources musulmanes nous apprennent qu'une des professions viles, celle de tanneur, était exercée surtout par des Juifs ⁴. Mais, à l'époque de la Gēniza, il n'en était pas ainsi : dans tous les types de documents-listes — comptes, documents juridiques, correspondances d'affaires ou correspon-

1. On trouvera les sources de cette sous-section dans l'article cité, p. 849, note 2.

2. Thèse soumise au Conseil de l'Université hébraïque de Jérusalem, en janvier 1963. Les résultats de cette importante étude seront bientôt publiés dans une langue européenne.

3. R. BRUNSCHVIG a étudié les professions méprisées en Islam avec une attention particulière pour la façon dont en traitent les sources légales musulmanes, dans « Métiers vils en Islam », *Studia Islamica*, XVI, 1962, pp. 4-60. Cf. aussi Farhat J. ZIADEH, « Equality (kafā'a) in the Muslim Law of Marriage », *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 6, 1957, pp. 503-17.

4. Cf. S. W. BARON, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, pp. 116-7, où sont aussi passées en revue des sources non-musulmanes.

dances privées — les tanneurs sont extrêmement rares, aussi bien que le nom de famille « Tanneur ». On connaît par leur nom un grand nombre de marchands et d'érudits juifs de Tunisie, mais jusqu'ici je n'en ai trouvé aucun dans la Gēniza qui portât le nom de Tanneur. Par contre, un éminent auteur musulman tunisien s'appelait ainsi au XIII^e siècle. La liste de Hayyim Cohen dont nous avons parlé relève huit érudits musulmans ainsi dénommés.

C'est à une époque plus tardive et plus fanatique que les groupes minoritaires ont été rejetés vers les professions viles. Ainsi dans des pays musulmans aussi éloignés les uns des autres que le Maroc, le Yémen et Bukhara, on obligeait les Juifs à nettoyer les fosses d'aisance. Mais l'époque et la région que reflètent les documents de la Gēniza sont marqués par une liberté et une mobilité socio-économique remarquables. Comme nous avons essayé de le montrer, les pressions naturelles qui jouent chaque fois que des groupes sociaux de force inégale vivent côte à côte conduisaient inévitablement à certaines spécialisations, mais ces pressions n'étaient pas coercitives et n'aboutissaient pas à une discrimination sanctionnée par la loi ou imposée par des mesures administratives.

Caractère international des arts et métiers.

La liberté socio-économique caractéristique du Haut Moyen Âge dans la région méditerranéenne se manifeste également par la fréquence et l'éventail très largement ouvert des transferts d'industries d'un pays à un autre. Assurément ce phénomène remarquable remonte aux temps préhistoriques ; les témoignages archéologiques et historiques sur le Proche-Orient antique nous le révèlent avec une grande netteté. Des artisans égyptiens ont ainsi voyagé jusqu'en Babylonie et au pays des Hittites. Les Assyriens ont transféré de force tous les ouvriers spécialisés d'une ville conquise dans leur propre pays, et les Babyloniens ont suivi leur exemple, comme nous le voyons dans la Bible (2 Rois 24 : 14) ¹. Les Perses firent de même de façon systématique, au point que certaines des principales industries iraniennes du Moyen Âge ont dû leur origine à la transplantation de colonies d'Arméniens, de Grecs, d'autres encore. Ce phénomène a atteint des proportions massives en Islam. D'abord par la réduction en esclavage et le travail forcé ; plus tard — surtout dans la période qui nous intéresse — par le libre jeu des relations réciproques ; l'Islam a ainsi mêlé les peuples, et, des marches de Chine jusqu'aux frontières de France, il a créé une sorte d'aire commune animée par un échange constant de produits, d'hommes et de techniques. Les documents de la Gēniza du Caire éclairent bien cette situation.

Il est inutile de rappeler le flot continu de marchandises entre le Moyen

1. Cf. B. MEISSNER, *op. cit.* pp. 229-230.

Orient et l'Europe aux ^xⁱ^e et ^{xii}^e siècles ¹. Quant à la mobilité des artisans, on trouvait, en Égypte, à notre époque, des artisans originaires de tous les pays compris entre l'Espagne à l'Ouest, la Géorgie et l'Iran à l'Est. La Gēniza mentionne des teinturiers en soie, des orfèvres, des fourreurs, tailleurs, savetiers et copistes (de livres hébreux) venant de *Rum*, c'est-à-dire de Byzance ou des pays chrétiens en général ; des artisans verriers, des tisserands et teinturiers en soie syro-palestiniens, en si grand nombre que les artisans égyptiens en ressentaient la concurrence. De même un orfèvre en argent de Ceuta au Maroc, et deux autres orfèvres Maghribi, émigrant par l'Égypte et Aden jusqu'au lointain Ceylan ; un cordonnier et un fabricant de zurunbāq (tissu espagnol) venant d'Espagne ; un fabricant de cuillers d'argent, d'Iran ; un forgeron de Bagdad et un teinturier de Tiflis. Dans quelques cas, il est dit que ces personnes avaient quitté leurs pays respectifs par suite de persécutions et autres circonstances dramatiques. Pour d'autres artisans, on peut penser qu'il en fut de même, car ils apparaissent sur les listes de ceux qui reçoivent des aumônes. La présence de ces artisans étrangers n'a pas été sans influencer le travail local, particulièrement quand ils représentaient une véritable concurrence ².

A cet égard il est hautement significatif que les noms dérivés des lieux d'origine des produits aient fini par désigner les produits eux-mêmes. Le *dabiqi*, toile ainsi nommée d'après une ville égyptienne, était fabriqué à Kāzirūn, ville de Perse. Précédemment, nous dit un géographe musulman, le lin, ou toile d'Égypte, était importé par mer jusqu'à Shīnīz, le port de Kazirun ; mais maintenant (dernier tiers du ^x^e siècle) ce beau tissu est fabriqué à partir de lin cultivé localement. Tavvaz, autre ville perse proche de la côte et qui, de ce fait, était bien placée pour importer de la toile d'Égypte, excellait aussi dans la fabrication de la toile et donna même son nom à une variété de toile, qui le garda longtemps après que la fabrication eût passé à Kāzirūn ³. Or nous voyons dans les lettres de la Gēniza que des familles juives, vivant en Égypte depuis le début du ^xⁱ^e siècle, portaient des génériques dérivés de ces trois villes persanes, à savoir Kāzirūnī, Shīnīzī et Tavvazi. Nous ne savons pas encore si leurs ancêtres étaient effectivement venus de la Perse en Égypte (ce qui est probable), ou si ces familles avaient vendu ou avaient fabriqué au Caire les toiles ainsi nommées. Il est tout à fait possible que ces trois éventualités soient vraies à la fois, c'est-à-dire que ces familles aient émigré de Perse en Égypte et qu'elles aient été parmi celles qui introduisirent la fabrication des tissus où s'étaient illustrées leurs villes natales.

1. L'auteur traite ce vaste sujet au chapitre III de *Mediterranean Society*, et dans son livre sur le commerce des Indes. Cf. la note bibliographique ci-dessus, p. 847.

2. On trouvera au chapitre I (2) de *Mediterranean Society* les matériaux de la Gēniza pour ce paragraphe et le suivant.

3. Voir A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Heidelberg, 1922, p. 434.

Une autre éminente famille juive de Perse, les Tustarī, devait aussi son nom à une ville et à un tissu. Les Tustarī à l'origine faisaient commerce de tissus de qualité, mais ne se limitaient pas à la variété dont ils portaient le nom. Telle lettre nous apprend, en effet, qu'ils envoient, parmi beaucoup d'autres tissus, une Razi (robe faite à Rayy ou nommée, d'après cette ville du nord de la Perse) depuis le Caire jusqu'à Kairouan, alors capitale de la Tunisie ¹. Trois fois nous trouvons du tissu *tustarī* importé en Égypte depuis l'Occident par des gens portant le nom Andalusī (ce qui pourtant ne signifie pas nécessairement qu'il était fabriqué en Espagne ; il aurait pu aussi bien être fait en Sicile ou en Tunisie ; une famille appelée Andalusī apparaît comme établie depuis longtemps dans le Kairouan du XI^e siècle).

Tel tissu précieux que les sources littéraires mentionnent fréquemment : le *Sūsī*, peut aussi bien se rapporter à Sūs (ancienne Suse) au sud de la Perse, qu'à Sousse en Tunisie. Cependant, les lettres de la Gēniza du XI^e siècle se réfèrent assurément à cette dernière ville, car elles parlent souvent de marchands exportant du lin égyptien à Sousse en Tunisie et, de là, réimportant la belle toile dont ce lin avait été la matière première. Le Caire lui-même avait un bazar *Sūsī*, mais on ne sait pas si ce tissu y était seulement vendu ou bien fabriqué ². Cependant un document de la Gēniza, daté de 1098, mentionne le *sūsī rūṣī*, une toile *sūsī* fabriquée en Russie, qui était confiée à un marchand en partance pour l'Inde et qui atteignait un prix exceptionnellement élevé. Ainsi nous voyons qu'un tissu que l'on fabriquait effectivement dans sa ville d'origine pouvait faire l'objet d'une imitation dans un pays très éloigné ³.

Le *tabarī* nous en fournit l'exemple le plus courant. C'était une tapisserie fabriquée à l'origine au Tabaristan sur la côte sud de la mer Caspienne et que l'on imitait ailleurs. Dans plusieurs contrats de mariage de la Gēniza, la mariée reçoit un « *tabarī* de Tabaristan » c'est-à-dire authentique. La plupart des contrats omettent cependant cette qualification ; l'un d'eux précise que la mariée recevra un *tabarī* ramli, c'est-à-dire fait à Ramle (nom de villes de Palestine et d'Égypte).

Nous concluerons cette étude des industries migratrices par un exemple que les témoignages convergents d'un document de la Gēniza et d'une source littéraire rendent particulièrement parlant. Un géographe musulman note qu'à Kal'at Hammād, alors capitale de l'Algérie, « on fait du feutre excellent, appelé *talaqān* » (d'après une ville du nord de l'Iran) ; et une lettre de la Gēniza montre que l'on exporte du feutre *talaqān* de Tripoli en Libye jusqu'en Égypte, ce qui signifie soit que cette industrie,

1. TS 12.133, ligne 28.

2. Cf. R. B. SERJEANT, « Islamic Textiles », *Ars Islamica*, XV-XVI (1951), pp. 47-48.

3. Cf. l'étude de l'auteur, « From the Mediterranean to India », *Speculum*, 29, 1954, p. 192, note 20.

persane à l'origine, était imitée à Tripoli, soit que l'on se trouve devant un cas de réexportation. Les deux sources, la littéraire et la documentaire, datent du XI^e siècle.

Pas de corporations.

L'absence de corporations professionnelles rigidement organisées est une dernière preuve de cette liberté de mouvement et de cet esprit d'entreprise individualiste qui caractérisent le monde des artisans méditerranéens aux XI^e et XII^e siècles.

Aujourd'hui on parle volontiers de corporations musulmanes. Mais si pour la fin du Moyen Age, on a des attestations de l'existence de ces corporations, rattachées aux confréries mystiques musulmanes, il reste encore à prouver qu'elles existaient aux XI^e et XII^e siècles. L'article de l'*Encyclopédie de l'Islam* qui traite ce sujet (au mot *sinf*) ne fournit, à vrai dire, aucune preuve réelle de l'activité des corporations qui soit antérieure au XIII^e siècle. On y affirme que la fabrication des produits pharmaceutiques et le travail des métaux précieux dans les états musulmans étaient l'apanage exclusif des corporations chrétiennes et juives — affirmation arbitraire si l'on songe au grand nombre de parfumeurs et d'orfèvres musulmans qui exerçaient ce métier même avant l'an 470 de l'ère musulmane (1077-8).

Au Moyen Age, le terme de « corporation » désigne, en Occident, une organisation d'artisans et de marchands qui, afin de maintenir une certaine qualité de la production, surveillait le travail de ses membres, établissait des règles et veillait à former des apprentis et à les initier à l'organisation. La corporation protégeait ses membres contre la concurrence et, dans les pays chrétiens comme dans les pays islamiques, était étroitement liée à la religion.

On cherche vainement, dans les documents de la Gēniza, ou dans les manuels musulmans sur la réglementation des marchés contemporains, un équivalent arabe du mot « corporation ». Ce mot n'existait pas car l'institution correspondante n'existait pas. C'est la police d'État, aidée d'experts de confiance, qui était chargée de surveiller la qualité du travail des artisans. Pour les professions qui exigeaient des connaissances très spécialisées, comme celle de médecin, ou pour des professions particulièrement exposées aux fraudes ou autres infractions à la loi, on recommandait de nommer « un homme de confiance appartenant à la profession » qui serait à même de bien remplir ce rôle. Cette clause même, ainsi que tous les livres sur la réglementation des marchés, prouve bien que les artisans n'étaient pas organisés en corporations s'efforçant de maintenir un certain niveau professionnel. Il convient de noter que l'ouvrage sur la réglementation des marchés le plus détaillé de cette époque ne conseille de désigner des surveillants particuliers, ou chefs, que pour un très petit nombre

des professions citées ¹. De même dans la Gēniza le *a'rif* (nom que portait ce chef), n'apparaît que très rarement et malheureusement sans que soit précisé le groupe qu'il dirigeait. On trouve un document de la Gēniza qui mentionne une contribution du *a'rif al-naqqādīn*, chef des Vérificateurs de monnaies et qui date du XIII^e siècle ².

En ce qui concerne l'apprentissage et l'admission dans une profession, on ne découvre dans nos sources ni formalités ni règles strictes. Les parents étaient censés faire apprendre un métier à leur fils et payer leur apprentissage. Une fille écrit, de la campagne, à sa mère, au Vieux-Caire, au sujet d'un jeune frère : « Comment as-tu pu laisser le garçon quitter la capitale avant d'avoir appris un métier ? » Dans un contrat de mariage avec une divorcée, fait en 1110 dans une ville du Delta du Nil, le futur mari s'engage à nourrir et vêtir le fils de sa femme et à lui faire apprendre un métier. Dans un accord entre deux époux, conclu au Vieux Caire en 1244, la mère promet de payer la pension et la capitation de leur fils aîné pendant deux ans, ainsi que son apprentissage dans l'orfèvrerie. En général, un fils suivait la profession de son père ou de ses oncles, et faisait son apprentissage en travaillant avec eux depuis son jeune âge. Cette règle n'avait pourtant rien d'absolu ³.

S'il avait existé un processus régulier d'initiation à une profession, comme dans les corporations européennes, les manuels de police dont nous avons parlé n'auraient pas manqué de traiter un sujet aussi important. Leur silence prouve qu'il n'y avait aucune règle en la matière. Certes, la profession de médecin, qui était également considérée comme un *sinā'a*, ou profession artisanale, ne pouvait, en règle générale, être exercée librement qu'après l'obtention d'un diplôme officiel ⁴. Le manuel de police espagnol dont nous avons parlé plus haut nous dit que les *sibyān* — mot qu'il ne faut pas traduire simplement par « jeunes gens » mais par « employés », « apprentis » — étaient tenus de faire leur prière régulièrement. Cette obligation est illustrée par une lettre de la Gēniza dans laquelle un apprenti se plaint d'avoir tellement de travail qu'il n'a même plus le temps de prier ⁵.

1. Le *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, éd. Reuben LEVY, Cambridge 1938, résumé anglais, p. 57 (médecins), pp. 89-92 (potiers, fabricants d'aiguilles, vendeurs de henné, marchands d'huile et fabricants de tamis). Le manuel espagnol sur la réglementation des marchés cité plus haut (p. 851, n. 1), p. 119, paragraphe 187, parlant du marché du bétail, exprime le souhait pieux que chaque profession ait un « prud'homme », *amīn*, pour la surveiller. La célèbre étude de Bernard LEWIS, « The Islamic Guilds » in *Economic History Review*, 8, 1937, pp. 20-37, traite surtout des *akhīs* d'Anatolie (voir p. suiv., n. 2) et ne contient pas de matériaux pour la période que nous étudions.

2. Cf. *Mediterranean Society*, chapitre II (2), notes 13-15.

3. Les sources de la Gēniza dans S. D. GOITEIN, *Jewish Education in Muslim Countries*, Jérusalem, 1962 (en hébreu), pp. 121-3.

4. Pour plus de détails, cf. notre étude : « The Medical Profession in the Light of Cairo Gēniza Documents », *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 34, 1963, pp. 177-194. Voir aussi la note qui suit.

5. Manuel (voir note 1), p. 119, paragraphe 186. TS, NS J 9, lignes 13-14. Cette lettre de la Gēniza mentionne un oculiste qui n'avait pas encore reçu son diplôme de docteur.

Les documents de la Gēniza fournissent des précisions abondantes sur la protection des industries locales contre la concurrence des nouveaux venus et des étrangers, mais nulle part on ne trouve mention d'une corporation qui aurait veillé à cette protection. Ce rôle était tenu par la communauté locale juive, les autorités centrales juives, la police ou les notables influents. On constate que, sur les listes de la Gēniza, les plus nombreux à recevoir des aumônes étaient des étrangers, dont beaucoup d'artisans, ce qui semble indiquer la difficulté qu'éprouvaient les nouveaux venus pour trouver du travail. En même temps on voit un groupe d'artisans se plaindre d'une communauté locale qui leur interdisait, sous menace d'excommunication, l'exercice de leur profession. En ce domaine il n'y avait donc pas de règles strictes et sévères comparables à celles des corporations de la fin du Moyen Age ¹.

Les associations d'artisans et de marchands de la Rome Impériale, ou du moins certaines d'entre elles, avaient un caractère religieux, souvent lié au culte local de la ville d'où venaient les fondateurs de l'association. De même, les corporations chrétiennes de la fin du Moyen Age avaient leur saint patron et des rites particuliers. Le XIV^e siècle a marqué l'apogée des corporations musulmanes, particulièrement en Anatolie (la Turquie d'aujourd'hui) qui adopta les doctrines et les cérémonies des fraternités mystiques musulmanes ². A l'époque et dans la région que nous étudions, on chercherait en vain une conjonction semblable d'artisanat et de culte religieux. Si l'on voit des mosquées porter souvent des noms de professions, c'est une simple allusion topographique, parce que la mosquée se trouve située dans la rue ou le bazar ainsi nommés. Un « responsum » de Maïmonide (vers 1190) nous apprend même que les orfèvres et les fabricants de verre musulmans et juifs s'associaient, allant jusqu'à partager leurs instruments ; les Musulmans percevaient les gains du samedi et les Juifs ceux du vendredi (ce qui semble indiquer, soit dit en passant, qu'au moins quelques artisans musulmans avaient adopté la coutume du jour de congé, bien que l'Islam, contrairement aux autres religions « abrahamiques », ne connaisse pas de jour de repos obligatoire). ³

Ce que nous avons découvert jusqu'à présent semblerait indiquer que l'organisation des arts et métiers au haut Moyen Age était très différente de celle de la fin de l'Antiquité ou de celle du bas Moyen Age, au moins sur les littoraux sud, ouest et est de la Méditerranée. Les renseignements positifs recueillis dans les documents de la Gēniza viennent largement à l'appui des nombreux indices négatifs que nous avons relevés dans les pages précédentes.

1. Pour plus de détails, voir *Mediterranean Society*, ch. II (2), notes 16-17.

2. Cf. l'article *Akhī* dans la seconde édition de l'*Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (FR. TAESCHNER).

3. Moïse b. MAIMON, *Responsa*, éd. J. BLAU, Jérusalem, 1960, p. 360.

Associations libres. Formes courantes de la coopération industrielle.

Il n'y avait pas à notre époque — nous l'avons dit — de corporations de métiers à la base de l'organisation du travail. Le rôle des salariés — que l'on traitera plus loin — était limité. Le travail des esclaves était négligeable dans les arts et métiers ¹. C'étaient les contrats d'association, conclus en des termes semblables à ceux d'associations commerciales, qui représentaient la forme principale de coopération industrielle.

Nous avons étudié dans *Mediterranean Society* (chapitre II, section 2), à l'aide de vingt-trois documents, la nature et la portée de ces associations. Dix-neuf de ces documents viennent de la Gêziza du Caire, et quatre de consultations écrites en arabe et soumises à Moïse Maïmonide (mort en 1204) et à son fils et successeur Abraham (mort en 1237). Chronologiquement les contrats s'échelonnent entre 1016 et 1240 ; les sommes investies vont de 4 à 600 dinars ², et la durée des associations varie entre six mois et demi et la durée de presque toute une vie. Les industries en cause étaient la fabrication du verre, la teinturerie, l'orfèvrerie et le monnayage, le travail des métaux, celui de la soie, le tissage, le métier de tailleur, la tannerie, la boulangerie, la fabrication des produits pharmaceutiques, et, en un ou deux cas, les fabriques de sucre.

La diversité même de ces contrats met en évidence leur caractère commercial ; ils sont pour la plupart différents les uns des autres. Ce n'étaient donc pas la coutume et la tradition qui dictaient les termes des accords, mais bien les conditions économiques propres à chaque association.

Lorsque les associés mettaient en commun capitaux, travail et outils à parts égales, la situation était relativement simple : ils partageaient aussi profits et pertes au prorata de leurs apports, et retiraient de la « bourse de l'association » certaines sommes pour leurs repas ³. Quand des associations de trois ou cinq partenaires duraient pendant des années, elles prenaient le caractère de Compagnies. Une consultation soumise à Maïmonide, nous montre une compagnie d'associés dans un atelier de soieries à al-Mahalla, ville importante de la Basse Égypte, ouvrant une succursale au Vieux Caire, non loin de l'atelier d'une autre compagnie. Cette dernière, craignant la concurrence, décide de prendre chez elle un

1. Cf. de l'auteur, « Slaves and Slavegirls in the Cairo Gêziza Records », *Arabica*, 9, 1960, pp. 1-20.

2. A cause de l'énorme différence des niveaux de vie à notre époque et aux ^x^{re} et ^{xiii}^e siècles, il est très difficile d'évaluer le pouvoir d'achat d'une pièce d'or de l'époque. Différentes sources indiquent qu'une famille de la classe pauvre pouvait vivre modestement avec 2 dinars par mois. Le prix moyen d'un *thawb*, vêtement courant masculin et féminin, qui durait souvent toute une vie, était de 1 dinar. On pouvait acheter pour le même prix environ 135 kg de pain. Ainsi on peut peut-être admettre qu'un dinar équivalait à cinquante dollars. Cf. les travaux de M. E. АШТОР.

3. Environ une pièce d'argent et demi, cf. ci-dessous.

des artisans d'al-Mahalla, tandis qu'un de ses membres ira rejoindre les associés de la ville de province. L'accord est conclu sur cette base, mais les capitaux des deux compagnies ne sont pas fondus ¹.

De même, lorsqu'on voit mentionnées, dans des lettres, des affaires se traitant avec « les ouvriers de la soie d'Alexandrie », « les peintres de motifs » de Qayrawan, ou bien « nos corréligionnaires, les fabricants de verre », on peut penser qu'il s'agit de compagnies de ce type plutôt que de familles spécialisées dans ces professions. En effet, dans les trois cas cités, c'est le pluriel arabe qui est employé, alors que l'on trouve toujours le singulier féminin quand il s'agit de « clans » comme ceux des « fabricants de tamis », des « teinturiers d'indigo », des « fabricants d'écharpes », etc ².

Chose étrange, une industrie que sa nature même semble destiner à se former en Compagnie, le service postal privé par voie de terre (par opposition au service officiel) était organisée sur une base purement individuelle ; c'est ce que l'on peut inférer des nombreuses allusions qui y sont faites dans les documents de la Gēniza. Les bateaux aussi étaient, d'une façon générale, la propriété de particuliers ; sur les cinquante bateaux mentionnés dans la Gēniza, un seul était la propriété d'une association ³.

A l'occasion, on empruntait le total des capitaux investis dans une association ; mais d'une façon générale un artisan qui n'avait pas, ou peu, d'argent, s'associait avec un compagnon du même métier qui pouvait apporter les fonds nécessaires ou le matériel. Dans un contrat daté de 1217, deux fabricants de verre décident de travailler ensemble, l'un fournissant du verre rouge (de Beyrouth) et du verre égyptien local, soit la valeur de 199 dinars, tandis que l'autre n'investit que 6 dinars et une petite quantité de fournitures valant environ dix autres pièces d'or. Dans un autre contrat du même genre, daté de 1134, un fabricant de verre n'apporte aucun capital et reçoit même de son associé un prêt personnel de 10 dinars ; celui-ci fournit encore des matières premières évaluées à 20 dinars. L'associé capitaliste travaille deux jours par semaine et l'autre quatre. Ceci excepté, tout est divisé en parts égales : les frais de combustibles, pour le salaire d'un ouvrier et pour les petits articles que l'on retirait de l'association ; enfin, les profits devaient être divisés à l'expiration du contrat. Cette association était prévue pour une durée de six mois et demi seulement, ce qui représentait sans doute le temps nécessaire au débiteur pour gagner la somme empruntée ⁴.

1. *Responsa* (voir p. 860, n. 8), pp. 177-8, « Une compagnie d'associés dans un atelier de soie », *jamā 'at shariha* (autre ms. : *shurakā'*) *fī qā' al harir*. Le mot *qā'a* désigne le rez-de-chaussée d'une maison qui était souvent loué comme atelier. La lettre mentionne plus loin les deux compagnies par le terme *al-qā' atayn*.

2. Cf. *Mediterranean Society*, chapitre II, section 2, note 12, et section I, note 13, « peintres de motifs » est un essai de traduction de *lawwān*.

3. Cf. *ibid.*, chapitre IV, sections 3 et 7.

4. New York, Jewish Theol. Sem., Geniza Misc. 27 ; Oxford, Bodleian, ms. Heb. a 8 (Catal. Neubauer 2873), f. 8. Les deux contrats sont traduits dans *Readings*.

En général, beaucoup de ces associations étaient conclues pour un temps relativement court, par exemple une année. Pour une association à caractère commercial il était normal de débiter au printemps — époque du premier convoi de bateaux permettant d'aller à l'étranger et d'y faire des affaires en été — et de s'achever après la vente, l'hiver suivant, des marchandises rapportées. Une association industrielle, par contre, ne pouvait envisager de réels bénéfices que sur une période plus longue. De toute évidence, les contrats de courte durée s'entendaient pour des périodes d'essai et étaient renouvelés en cas de résultats satisfaisants.

Enfin — fait très caractéristique de l'époque et de la région que nous étudions — on appliquait à l'industrie une forme populaire de coopération commerciale : la « commenda ». Dans une « commenda », un ou plusieurs bailleurs de fonds s'associent avec un ou plusieurs agents commerciaux qui assurent le travail ¹. La même forme d'association était pratiquée dans les arts et métiers. Dans certains cas, les conditions imposées par les bailleurs de fonds aux artisans nous semblent d'une générosité surprenante ; dans d'autres, elles apparaissent comme assez dures. A nouveau, nous rencontrons cette « liberté de contrat », cette absence de traditions rigides qui sont l'indice d'une société individualiste où joue la concurrence.

Pas de séparation nette entre industrie et commerce.

Certains contrats d'association spécifient qu'il s'agit de la fabrication *et de la vente* d'un produit et laissent même la latitude de vendre dans l'atelier commun des marchandises autres que celles fabriquées par les associés : c'était le cas lorsqu'un atelier de tailleur vendait des tissus. Lorsqu'on n'a pas de données supplémentaires, on est parfois bien en peine de savoir si un nom de profession dérivé d'un produit se rapporte à sa fabrication, à sa vente, ou bien aux deux à la fois. Ainsi un *ḵabbān*, ou « fromager », pouvait être un fabricant ou un marchand de fromage. Le plus souvent il devait vendre ses propres produits, tandis que les fromages importés en Égypte depuis la Sicile ou la Crète étaient vendus, en règle générale, par des marchands dont nous savons avec certitude qu'ils ne s'occupaient pas eux-mêmes de la fabrication.

Ces interférences un peu complexes pourraient être résumées brièvement comme suit : les marchands professionnels n'exerçaient jamais de métiers manuels sauf, bien entendu, en cas de force majeure, s'ils avaient perdu leurs capitaux. C'est ainsi qu'un drapier écrit qu'il a gagné sa vie comme tailleur à un moment où il ne faisait plus d'affaires. Quant aux artisans, ils vendaient couramment les produits qu'ils fabriquaient, mais selon des modalités variées. Ainsi, dans un contrat d'association avec un tisserand, il est stipulé que celui-ci n'a droit qu'à « la vente sur le marché »,

1. Cf. A. L. UDOVITCH, « At the origins of the Western Commenda », *Speculum*, 37 1962, pp. 198-207, où se trouvent d'autres indications bibliographiques.

c'est-à-dire qu'il ne lui est pas permis d'utiliser son atelier comme magasin de vente, mais qu'il doit faire vendre ce qu'il fabrique par un crieur de marché ou un intermédiaire. Il y avait enfin des artisans qui travaillaient comme salariés, soit par manque de capitaux ou à cause de leur basse position sociale, soit parce que la nature même de leur profession l'exigeait : ainsi les maçons et les charpentiers travaillant dans la construction.

Travailleurs et artisans employés. Les salaires.

On ne trouve ni dans les sources arabes ni dans les documents de la Gēniza relatifs aux ^xⁱ^e et ^{xii}^e siècles, l'équivalent d'une classe ouvrière moderne, c'est-à-dire d'une large fraction de la population employée au service d'industriels ; pas plus qu'on ne peut y trouver trace de corporations, forme de l'organisation industrielle à la fin du Moyen Age. Sauf peut-être pour les fabriques de papier et de sucre, toute la production venait d'ateliers privés exploités par des familles, restreintes ou étendues, ou par des associations souvent à court terme. Signalons en passant que les fabriques de papier avaient leur histoire propre. C'était une industrie toute nouvelle introduite dans les pays islamiques (et plus tard chrétiens) par des artisans chinois (qui avaient été faits prisonniers en 751 après J.-C.). Elle fut au début pratiquée dans de grands ateliers appartenant aux califes et aux gouverneurs. Quand la bourgeoisie mit la main sur cette industrie, elle lui conserva son mode d'organisation originel. C'est du moins l'impression que donne un document de la Gēniza où l'on voit une énorme quantité de papier de Damas qui porte la marque d'une même fabrique, alors que les marchands de tissus en gros transportaient normalement des produits de plusieurs ateliers qu'ils avaient manifestement choisis dans les bazars ¹.

Les fabriques de sucre, certaines du moins, devaient aussi ressembler à des installations industrielles modernes. On peut le conclure des deux faits suivants : d'une part, certains propriétaires sont des capitalistes et ne travaillent pas — même dans le cas de fabriques exploitées par des associés ; et, d'autre part, les sommes investies sont bien trop importantes pour de petits ateliers. Les raffineries de sucre constituaient, au surplus, de véritables points de repère dans la topographie du Vieux Caire, comme nous l'apprennent les livres des archéologues musulmans. On sait que la production du sucre était une industrie nouvelle comme celle du papier ; tout d'abord importée depuis les Indes dans le sud de la Perse, elle s'était répandue plus à l'ouest aux premiers temps de l'Islam. Du fait de sa nouveauté, cette industrie put prendre des formes d'organisation capita-

1. Cf. *Mediterranean Society*, chap. II (2), notes 2-4.

liste, contrairement aux arts et métiers d'origine antique, attachés à leurs traditions ¹.

D'autre part, il ne faudrait pas considérer comme des installations industrielles les ateliers gouvernementaux tels que les Monnaies, ou les ateliers où étaient confectionnés les robes d'apparat et autres vêtements sur lesquels était brodé le nom du souverain. Car, d'après ce que nous avons pu voir jusqu'ici, le personnel qui y travaillait ne se composait pas d'ouvriers à salaire fixe, mais d'artisans indépendants travaillant à la pièce. Ceci ne s'applique naturellement qu'à la période que nous considérons.

On rencontre dans les documents de la Gēniza trois catégories de travailleurs, c'est-à-dire d'ouvriers sans atelier propre ; ceux qu'on appelait « garçons » ou « jeunes hommes » (*sabī, ghulām*), d'autres désignés par les noms de « salariés, employés », ou simplement « ouvriers » (*ajīr, sānīc*), et enfin les ouvriers non spécialisé (*raqqās*, littéralement « coureurs » « garçons de courses » et autres expressions semblables ².

Les premières de ces appellations désignent essentiellement le stade de l'apprentissage, mais sont aussi utilisées dans les documents de la Gēniza d'une façon générale pour désigner les employés liés à leur employeur par des relations personnelles de longue date. De tels « garçons » pouvaient être appelés « sheikhs » ou « anciens », c'est-à-dire qu'on s'adressait à eux comme des citoyens respectables. Ces mêmes appellations étaient également données aux esclaves et aux affranchis ; seuls leur nom et le contexte permettaient de distinguer ceux qui étaient nés libres. Les mêmes termes étaient employés dans le commerce et l'industrie et, dans plus d'une lettre de la Gēniza, on voit un « maître » (*mu'allim*, mot usité aussi dans le commerce) faire allusion à « l'éducation » (*tarbiya*) qu'il a donnée à son ancien employé.

L'atelier d'un artisan utilisait un ou plusieurs travailleurs. On les voit, par exemple, contribuant avec leur maître à une souscription publique. Il faut cependant noter que les lettres et les actes juridiques de la Gēniza du Caire ne font allusion à eux que très rarement. Il est plus souvent fait mention de « coureurs » et autres manœuvres non spécialisés, en particulier ceux qui travaillaient dans la construction.

Quant aux salaires et aux conditions de travail, il ne faut pas oublier qu'on ne faisait normalement aucun contrat écrit pour embaucher un travailleur ; parfois pourtant on rédigeait un document, surtout dans les cas où l'on envisageait une longue période de travail, ou si l'embauche s'accompagnait de circonstances particulières. Par un heureux hasard, on a retrouvé des fragments à la fois du brouillon et de la rédaction finale

1. Cf. *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, au mot « Sukkar », et *Medit. Soc.*, Index, aux mots « Sugar-Industry » et « Trade ».

2. A moins d'indications contraires, les documents de la Gēniza utilisés dans cette section sont indiqués dans *Mediterranean Society*, chap. II, section 3.

ANNALES

d'un contrat d'embauche fait en 1057 au Vieux Caire : deux fabricants de verre, associés dans un atelier, embauchent un autre fabricant de verre, désigné comme ouvrier, pour travailler au four pendant une année. Par journée de travail, il reçoit 5 pièces d'argent (dirhams) plus son déjeuner, d'une valeur d'1 dirham. Pendant la durée du contrat, il ne peut travailler ailleurs. En cas de violation des clauses du contrat, il doit verser une amende de cinq pièces d'or aux caisses de deux synagogues du Vieux Caire désignées dans le contrat.

On peut glaner d'autres informations sur le même sujet dans les comptes des dépenses de la communauté juive du Vieux Caire dont on a retrouvé plus d'une centaine. Plusieurs de ces comptes, s'échelonnant de 1040 à 1199, fournissent des précisions sur les salaires payés aux maçons, charpentiers, « garçons » et ouvriers engagés dans les entreprises de construction, et à ceux qui les surveillent. Dans un compte de 1199, un maçon reçoit 5 dirhams et un repas d'une valeur de 1 dirham et demi, c'est-à-dire presque le même traitement qu'un fabricant de verre dans un contrat de 1057. Partout l'artisan spécialisé reçoit une rémunération de 4 à 6 dirhams ainsi que son repas, alors que les « garçons » et les ouvriers gagnent entre 1 1/2 et 2 dirhams 3/4, mais sans le repas. Même quand un maçon faisait des réparations dans une maison pendant presque un mois, et recevait son salaire en un seul versement, les comptes enregistrent tous les jours son repas, mais non celui de ses assistants qui étaient pourtant payés sur une base quotidienne. Le « travailleur en col blanc » qui dirigeait les opérations et tenait les comptes était le moins payé de tous : il recevait 3 dirhams par jour, ou même moins.

En comparant à d'autres sources les données que nous fournit la Gêziza sur le coût de la vie, nous arrivons à la conclusion qu'un artisan indépendant parvenait à gagner sensiblement plus que la moyenne de 2 dinars par mois ¹, minimum nécessaire à une famille de la classe pauvre. Les autres travailleurs avaient des revenus moyens bien au-dessous de ce minimum.

Deux classes de travailleurs : travailleurs aisés et prolétaires.

Cette étude sur les aspects techniques et économiques des arts et métiers aux XI^e et XII^e siècles nous amène à conclure que les artisans ne formaient pas une « classe ouvrière », unifiée et « égalitaire », opposée à une classe de capitalistes commerciaux et financiers. Le partage se fait

1. Le pouvoir d'achat du dirham de même que son rapport au dinar changeaient d'année en année et même dans la même année d'une ville à une autre. Cependant dans des documents datés de 1052 à 1169, nous voyons les tribunaux accorder une pension aux mineurs d'un demi-dirham par jour. Le rapport moyen entre les pièces d'or et d'argent était de 1/36 aux XI^e et XII^e siècles.

plutôt entre, d'une part, les maîtres des métiers nobles, qui travaillaient en général avec leurs propres capitaux ou bien formaient des associations libres et souvent à court terme, et de l'autre, ceux qui, dénués de ressources, exerçaient des professions non considérées, ainsi que les salariés et les pauvres en général.

Les artisans d'un certain rang social vendaient en général eux-mêmes leurs produits ; souvent, ils étaient aussi en partie négociants, et même, pourrait-on dire, capitalistes. Ainsi quand nous voyons un orfèvre s'occuper également de trafic de lin, il ne faut pas oublier qu'à cette époque, le lin jouait en Égypte, le rôle dévolu aujourd'hui aux actions et aux valeurs¹. Le fait d'exercer un métier manuel ne rangeait pas quelqu'un dans une classe particulière. Si sa famille était indépendante financièrement et s'il avait reçu une éducation convenable selon l'usage de ces familles, c'était un *sheikh*, un « ancien », un citoyen respectable.

Par contre être salarié, comme tout autre forme de dépendance, que ce fût dans le commerce ou dans l'industrie, était considéré comme une humiliation. « Je gagne mon pain au service des autres ; à chaque instant du jour, je vide la coupe de la mort à cause de mon avilissement et de celui de mes enfants » : ainsi parle un marchand, ruiné par un naufrage et obligé de travailler pour une autre maison de commerce². Mais on ne dépréciait pas, naturellement, la situation de salarié quand il s'agissait de la période d'apprentissage d'un métier ou du commerce, de « garçons » serviteurs chez les autres. On s'adressait à l'un de ces « garçons » en l'appelant « ancien » comme nous l'avons déjà signalé. Mais, passé ce moment, personne n'acceptait d'être un « salarié » à moins de s'y voir contraint par des nécessités financières impérieuses. Nous avons déjà rencontré, dans la Gēniza, trois cas où un employé, en dette envers son employeur, travaillait pour lui, afin de le rembourser.

La Gēniza révèle parfois une certaine tension entre les classes sociales. Ainsi il arrive aux *sibyān*, « garçons » ou « jeunes gens » de mettre en question l'autorité des « anciens », des citoyens respectables. Des lettres d'Alexandrie le montrent pour des teinturiers, des savetiers et des ramasseurs d'huîtres, et une lettre du Vieux Caire pour des potiers ; toutefois les auteurs de ces lettres, prennent les membres de ces professions comme exemples de gens du bas peuple et non comme représentants des artisans en général. En particulier, les ramasseurs d'huîtres juifs d'Alexandrie devaient avoir mauvaise réputation ; ils sont accusés d'actes choquants, comme de boire de la bière dans les tavernes des Croisés, à Acre³.

L'existence de possibilités d'ascension sociale, abondamment attestée par la Gēniza, confirme donc qu'à cette époque et dans cette région, les

1. TS, 16. 148. Traduit dans *Readings*.

2. TS, 10 J 12, f. 20 (N 144), marge.

3. Cf. GOITEIN, « The Jewish Local Community in the light of the Cairo Gēniza Documents », *Journal of Jewish Studies* 1962, pp. 133-158.

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membres des professions manuelles ne formaient pas une classe fermée et isolée. Des négociants en produits de valeur et des armateurs portent des noms d'artisans, tels que « Fabricant de peigne », « Fileur », « Potier » ou « Sellier ». On peut constater le même fait dans les familles dont on a retrouvé la généalogie dans des listes commémoratives. Si des changements de métiers aussi radicaux avaient pu s'opérer, c'est parce que la société méditerranéenne des ^{XI}^e et ^{XII}^e siècles, de façon assez analogue à la nôtre, avait une grande mobilité sociale et une grande liberté de mouvement, ce qui contraste fortement avec la période précédente et avec la période postérieure.

S. D. GOITEIN.



BRILL

Bankers Accounts from the Eleventh Century A.D.

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BANKERS ACCOUNTS FROM THE ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.*

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

A publication of selected bankers' accounts from the Cairo Geniza is justified inasmuch as they seem to be among the earliest examples of such material from medieval times. It must be stated, however, in advance, that they do by no means mirror the totality of the financial organization reflected in the Geniza documents. In order to forestall misunderstandings, a few general remarks on the subject are appropriate. It is treated in full in chapter III F ("Money, Banking and Finance") of volume I of my book *A Mediterranean Society*, which is now in print.

The society of the Fatimid period to a certain extent was based on a paper economy. Even the grocer was not paid by more well-to-do people in cash, but through an arrangement similar to the modern charge-account. One sent one's servant with a *ruq'a*, or note, properly dated and signed, indicating quantity and price of the commodity required. After 5, 10, or 20 such *ruq'as* had assembled with the grocer, he returned them in one bunch (which finally would find their way into the Geniza). Payment by promissory notes, also called *ruq'a*, was widespread. The Geniza has preserved also a bunch of 20 *ruq'as* containing solely orders of payment. From letters we learn that not only private persons, but even government offices, such as toll stations, accepted promissory notes instead of cash.

On the other hand, the use of *suftajas* was limited both geographically and otherwise. The translation of the term as "bill of exchange" is not warranted by the usage of the Geniza, for no payment in another curren-

*) I wish to thank Dr. Joachim O. Ronall, economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and member of the faculty of the New School for Social Research, New York, who read this article and made important suggestions for its improvement.

cy was involved. At the reverse, the references in the Geniza clearly indicate that the bearers wanted to receive exactly the same type of coins which they had paid in. There was a lively exchange of *suftajas* between the capital of Egypt and its provincial towns, as well as the cities of Palestine and Syria, also between Cairo and Bagdad, but none at all on the main trade route covered by the Geniza: Egypt and the West. As against hundreds—many hundreds—of instances of purses of gold and silver going east (partly also west), we have noted one case of a *šakka*, or “chek” of 200 dinars sent from Tripoli, Libya (rather a dependency of Egypt!) in 1063 or so to Fustat, while the letter reporting this fact mentions a purse containing 400 dinars sent from Sicily to the same destination. *Suftajas* were issued only by great bankers and against a considerable commission. They had to be redeemed at sight; otherwise a penalty was imposed. All this contributed to restrict the use of *suftajas*.

Deposits with bankers sometimes were very considerable, but they were short term and—strange as it may appear—there is no indication of interest granted by the banker or of a compensation paid to him for his services as a clearing house for payments. Having cash in hand obviously was the only advantage derived by him from this activity.

During the eleventh century, fixed interest was paid by Jews to Muslim moneylenders. The money was borrowed not for commercial purposes, but because of sheer want. The financial instruments for commercial undertakings were partnerships and commendas.

In the same century Jewish bankers granted loans to Muslims against collaterals. Although this is not stated expressly, there is little doubt that interest was paid for such loans. Cf. also below, no. 6.

Concealed, and even openly stipulated, interest make their appearance around the middle of the twelfth century in Geniza documents. Loans become important for overseas trade, and the “sea loan”, it seems, was taken over by the merchants of the Islamic area from their European business friends.

In the following, first, two documents related to partnership in banking are translated, one from the 11th and one from the beginning

of the 13th century. The accounts nos. 3-7 are all from the second half of the 11th century. No. 8, from around 1140, illustrates some aspects not found in the other documents. The great prominence of cash transactions, especially in gold, is remarkable in view of what has been said above about the wide use of written instruments replacing the use of specie. Perhaps Fatimid finances were under the shadow of the India trade, where gold and silver (sometimes also silk), but no ruq'as and suftajas served as means of payment. However, with the exception of the writer of no. 8, none of the many persons mentioned in the following is known to have been prominent in the India trade.

The interpretation of the documents translated in the following is merely tentative. They are presented here in order to enable those who have no direct access to them to participate in their elucidation.

ABBREVIATIONS

Cr. Credit, rendering Arabic *lahu*.

Dr. Debit, rendering Arabic *'indahu* or *'alayhi*.

d. *dinar*, the gold coin.

q. *qirāṭ* ($1/24$ of the dinar).

ḥ. *ḥabba* ($1/72$ of the dinar).

dirh. *dirham*, the silver coin. For the exchange value of gold and silver money, see Appendix.

The names of the coins are rendered in full when they appear thus in the original texts.

India Book A collection of Geniza texts referring to the India trade, prepared by the present writer for publication.

Med. Soc. *A Mediterranean Society*, the book referred to on p. 28.

(()) Deleted in the manuscript.

1. PARTNERSHIP IN A BANK

RESTRICTING THE POWERS OF THE JUNIOR PARTNER

University Library Cambridge, TS 12.784

The activities of a banker are clearly discernible in our document. They consisted of the assaying and changing of money on the one hand,

and of granting loans (and receiving deposits) on the other. The former remained under the supervision of the senior partner, while the latter was reserved to his discretion altogether. The junior had no right of signature on promissory notes. We find a similar stipulation in a partnership concluded in 1131, see below. p. 62.

Although the junior partner contributed only 58 dinars out of the total capital of 558, i.e. a little over ten percent, he shared in profit and loss to the amount of almost one third (exactly $7/24$). The work done by him was regarded as capital invested, while the senior partner would devote only a fraction of his time to this partnership. The court record says nothing about daily or weekly payments made to one or to both partners, nor does it fix the time when the profit and loss account should be made. Presumably fixed usages prevailed in this matter in the banking business. The court record obviously was modeled after a pattern common in Muslim courts, see p. 32, note 5.

The beginning of the document, which also contained its date, is lost. However, its approximate time can be fixed with certainty. It was signed by Abraham, son of Isaac ha-Talmīd ("the scholar"), a banker known from a great many dated documents from the years 1050-1093. The "trustee of the court" mentioned at the end of the document appears in Geniza records from 1084. Thus, this court record must have been written around 1088 or perhaps somewhat earlier, for the handwriting of Abraham, son of Isaac (who married already in 1050!) looks here very vigorous and youthful.

The preserved part of the document begins with the traditional phrases indicating that the two parties had made this agreement under no constraint, and then continues:

We asked God for guidance and contracted a partnership between us. I, Yahyā *ha-Kohen*, produced from my property five hundred gold dinars, of excellent quality, of full weight according to Egyptian standard, cash money, and Mr. *Sāsōn* . . . Abu 'l-Surūr ¹⁾ produced from

1) The Hebrew and Arabic names of the man have the same meaning: Joy. The obliterated words probably were: "known as". Hebrew words are italicized.

his property fifty eight gold dinars of excellent quality, the total being five hundred and fifty eight gold pieces of excellent quality. This was done *on condition* that the money should be in my hands, I, *the said* Yaḥyā *ha-Kohen*, and that we should work with it and find our livelihood in banking ¹⁾, *on condition* that *the said* Mr. Sāsōn, my partner, will sit with me in the store under my supervision ²⁾, will weigh ³⁾ and (do) any other part of our work, will go to court with those who owe us something, will deal with those with whom I shall allow him to deal ⁴⁾, will make the accounts with the customers for me, but will not write promissory notes for anyone, be he a customer or not, nor object to my dealings with one customer in preference to another ⁵⁾. Furthermore, *on condition* that I, Yaḥyā *ha-Kohen*, shall be considered as *trustworthy as two witnesses admitted in court*, my partner, *the said* Sāsōn having no right to demand from me *an oath*, and not even a *ban in general terms or an oath by transfer* ⁶⁾.

Of whatever profit obtained *by the grace of Heaven*, the *said* Sāsōn, my partner, will receive one sixth and one eighth after the restitution of the capitals, which amount to five hundred and fifty eight dinars, and I, the *said* Yaḥyā *ha-Kohen* will receive two thirds and one twenty fourth part ⁷⁾.

Whichever one of us chooses to withdraw from the partnership must wait and not take out his share for one month, during which he will receive nothing from the profits under any circumstances.

If—*God forbid*—some of the capital should be lost, there will be the same distribution as with the profit. I, Yaḥyā *ha-Kohen*, shall bear two

1) Literally: money changing, *ṣarf*. Perhaps *fi 'l-ṣarf* stands here for *dār al-ṣarf* "in the exchange (bourse) of the money changers".

2) Literally: "before me".

3) The coins. In all transactions money was weighed (and not only counted).

4) Reference to persons who ask for a loan.

5) Literally: "with Zayd in preference to 'Omar". The writer's use of the names common in Muslim documents (instead of Reuben and Simon, as used in Jewish records) proves that the author of our document was well versed in Muslim formularies.

6) About the meaning of these legal terms see *Med. Soc.* Vol. II, ch. vii, B, 3.

7) Literally: "One of its qirāṭs" (the dinār has twenty four qirāṭs).

thirds and one twenty fourth of the loss and *the said Mr. Sāsōn*, my partner, one sixth and one eighth.

Mr. Sāsōn accepted all these conditions *from beginning to end*, after they had been read out to him and after he had taken notice of all their implications. Moreover, *Mr. Sāsōn* will regard *the honored Mr. ‘Ullā ha-Levi, son of Joseph (may he rest in Paradise)* as *trustworthy as two witnesses admitted in court* with respect to all actions he will take on behalf of them both, and he has no right to demand from him an oath etc. ¹⁾

Furthermore, the two have undertaken to exert themselves and to work hard for the success of their business. Neither one will conceal anything from his partner. They promise to apply *faithfulness before Heaven* ²⁾ and to act in a way which will earn them God's reward.

Finally, the two have accepted responsibility for all the foregoing for themselves and for their heirs after their death.

(There follow five lines of legal phrases, describing the document as a valid instrument made in compliance with the prescripts of the sages of the Talmud and in accordance with general usage. One of the four signatories was Jekuthiel, representative of the merchants in Old Cairo).

2. STATEMENT ABOUT A DISSOLVED PARTNERSHIP IN A BANK

TS 13 J 6, f. 5.

This carefully written page certainly accompanied a letter of mandate in which the writer empowered an attorney to claim a certain sum from his former partners. Our page does not contain the names of these partners nor does it make mention of the exact sum claimed by the

1) ‘Ullā ha-Levi, son of Joseph, was a “trustee of the court”, cf. *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, ch. vii and connected with our Yaḥyā in various business ventures, see *Med. Soc.* I, ch. iii. Now the junior partner acceded to an arrangement, according to which ‘Ullā was empowered to act for Yaḥyā.

2) I.e., in the absence of the partner.

writer. It is an explanatory statement, the like of which used to accompany a power of attorney.

There are several points in this document which deserve attention. Six years had passed since the dissolution of the partnership. For reasons certainly stated in the power of attorney (such as a journey to India or a persecution requiring a person to go into hiding) no claim had been submitted to a court thus far. The statement seems to assume that, with one partial exception, the loans given before the dissolution of the partnership were still outstanding. Since the loans had been granted by the partners "sitting" in the office without consulting the writer—which was against the stipulations of their contract—they alone were fully responsible for any losses which might have resulted from their action. It is noteworthy that the persons to whom money was lent were either Muslim or Christian.

Since Būra, a locality near Damietta, is mentioned twice, and the loans granted to persons in the latter city form the main object of the statement, it is feasible that the bank concerned had its seat there. Our document most probably was written in Old Cairo, but for some reason or other was regarded as insufficient and was not sent on with the attorney who was entrusted with the case. Thus it found its way into the Geniza. The script belongs to the first half of the thirteenth century.

Statement about a debt of three hundred dinars owed to a number of partners as contained in a p(artnership's) account book.

Two out of the partners, namely Abu 'l-Ḥasan, son of Abu 'l-Faraj, and Khalaf, son of Ḥasan, withdrew. The rest of the partners, who permanently stayed at the office¹⁾, stood security for their share in the total of the said three hundred dinars, which were comprised in the account book and lent to certain specified persons. It was they (the stationary partners) who took the money out without my permission, I, Abu 'l-Ḥasan, son of Abu 'l-Faraj.

1) Literally: storeroom or warehouse, *makhzan*, cf. Dozy *Supplément*, I, p. 369, line 10 (according to a nineteenth century Algerian dictionary).

Of the sums thus taken out, the partners received back eighteen dinars from Abu 'l-'Alā', son of Abu 'l-Şidād of Būra, and again three dinars.

The account from Damietta, as contained in the book, was as follows:

Jalāl al-Dawla ("the Splendor of the Government"), the director of the Ṭirāz¹⁾ workshop, owes fifty dinars.

Muntaşir of Būra—twenty five dinars.

Fakhr al-Dawla ("the Glory of the Government")²⁾—five hundred dirhams.

The *qissīs* (Coptic priest) of Barbaya—four hundred dirhams.

The rest of that quantity of money has been dispersed in different localities. They took it out with their own hands without my permission and without consulting me, for we³⁾ used to come only occasionally to the office, while they sat there continuously.

When we withdrew, they took upon themselves the responsibility for all that belonged to us according to the account book and charged it in its entirety to those who had entered the partnership besides us. Six years (have passed) since we withdrew, during which period I was kept busy with myself⁴⁾.

3. WEEKLY ACCOUNT SHEETS OF A SMALL BANKER

TS Arabic Box 30, f. 32

The first two of five leaves written by a fledgling banker are translated here because they convey an idea of the book-keeping for deposit-banking, for which no other examples have been found thus far. Each

1) Government workshops for the weaving and embroidering of textiles bearing the name of the ruler, cf. EI s.v. *Ṭirāz* (A. Grohmann). Damietta was known as the seat of such a workshop, cf. the article referred to.

2) Many Jews bore titles composed with the word *dawla*, government, but the combinations appearing here have not yet been found in the Geniza with regard to Jews. Moreover, the director of the Ṭirāz workshop used to be one of the highest dignitaries, cf. the article mentioned in the previous note.

3) "We" may refer either to the writer together with the other partner who withdrew from the partnership, or to the writer alone.

4) Explanation why the claimant had not applied to a court before.

customer was listed on a separate sheet showing his weekly debit and credit. The second account shows a heavy overdraft. No balances from preceding weeks are indicated and presumably did not exist.

The writer was a mere beginner and, as his poor handwriting shows, had little education. His capital consisted of 8 $\frac{7}{24}$ dinars, see column II d, f. 8, and on one of the pages not rendered here, p. 8 b, l. 6, he notes an expenditure of 3 dirhams on the *manāqid*, a chest with drawers, as the money changers used to keep¹⁾. His name was Mūsā, p. 8a, l. 4, and it is highly probable that he is identical with the banker bearing that name, mentioned with small sums in no. 4, p. 40, below, I, l. 24, II, l. 13, since the two lists have other names and details in common.

One is surprised to find great merchants such as Nahray b. Nissīm and Barhūn Tāhertī or members of the Exchange confiding their money to such a poor man. Most probably they wanted to give Mūsā, who perhaps was an orphan (which would explain his poor education), a start in life.

Ia	8 Wednesday, 22 Muḥarram
1 Sunday, 19 Muḥarram	9 Abū Yaḥyā cr. from Abu 'l-
2 Abū Yaḥyā ²⁾ credit, a purse of 11 d. exactly	10 Khayr ⁵ by note 20 d. exactly
3 From Ibrahīm ³⁾	Ib
4 Monday, 20 Muḥarram	1 Barhūn ⁶⁾ cr. from Ben Manas- seh
5 Abū Yaḥyā ((loose)) ⁴⁾ from	2 10½ ¼ d.
6 Ishāq in the House of Ex-	3 Total in gold
7 change 11 ½ d. ½ q.	

1) See Dozy, *Supplément* II, p. 709 b.

2) This is Nahray b. Nissīm, a Qayrawānese merchant who was active in Egypt 1045-1096.

3) No doubt identical with Abraham, "the Son of the Scholar", the banker mentioned above p. 31.

4) I.e. not in a sealed purse. Deleted, because the money was delivered in a sealed purse.

5) Abu 'l-Khayr, presumably the same to whom no. 4 is addressed.

6) Barhūn Tāhertī, Nahray's senior partner, cf. above p. 36. Nahray paid in for him. Therefore, the payments of the two men are registered together.

4 54 (in Arabic characters:)

less $\frac{1}{8}$

(the rest of the page is cut away)

Ic

Price of 11 d. in silver ¹⁾

2 Exchange rate 3 $1\frac{1}{4}$ ²⁾

3 343 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$

Id and Ila: not used

IIb

1 Thābit debit, a purse to Ishāq

2 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ d. $\frac{1}{2}$ q.

3 Dr. note to Ishāq

12 $\frac{2}{3}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ q.

4 Dr. ((to Ibrahīm)) a purse

5 to Ibrahīm 11 d. exactly

6 Dr. a purse to Ibrahīm 8 d.
exactly

7 Total 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{8}$

8 Credit, 600 dirh. less $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$

9 Wednesday, 22 Muḥarram

IIc

1 Debit, Thursday 23 Muḥarram

2 Note to Abu 'l-Khayr 20 d.

3 Dr., a purse to Abraham 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ d. 1 q.

4 Dr., a purse to al-Anṣarī 3 d. exactly

5 Cr. on the same day 400 dirh. exactly

6 Friday, 24 Muḥarram

7 300 dirh.

IIId

1 (In Arabic characters:) Debit. Then, encircled and crossed out:
2-3 Abraham: Deb. 25 d. and one ḥ. Credit 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. less $\frac{1}{4}$ Cr. 47 $\frac{1}{4}$.

4 My belongings: with Yāfī 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.

1) Nahray had asked the gold contained in the first purse sent in to be changed for him, see l. 2.

2) On a page not translated here, referring to the subsequent Sunday, the rate of exchange was 3 $1\frac{1}{2}$.

- 5 With Zikrī 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
- 6 With Ishāq in the Exchange 2d. 1 q.
- 7 In my purse $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
- 8 Total in gold 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ d.

4. A MONEYCHANGER'S ACCOUNT

This document shows how large amounts of foreign currencies were acquired and how they were paid for.

TS Arabic Box 54, f. 15b

The first two columns and main part of the manuscript are in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm. The third column is written with two different thick pens and at least in one different handwriting. The whole is a draft made by Nahray and complemented by a clerk. A stroke is drawn over each of the three columns, which, in Nahray's bank, meant that the accounts had been copied into the ledger and possibly that they had also been sent to the customer.

The latter was a merchant-banker who must have done much business with *Shām* (Syria and Lebanon today), for he acquired large quantities of dinars of Damascus (almost 400 d., I, l. 3 and 5, II, l. 18) and of Tripoli, Lebanon (I, ll. 4, 6, 8, 10). Limited amounts of Fustat (Miṣr) dinars are mentioned, too (I, l. 9, II, l. 18) as being bought. Thus the dinars on which the account is based must have been Murābiṭīs. Most of the time, the customer must have lived in Fustat, as the many references to persons and institutions in that city prove. He also personally handed over to Nahray purses and loose money, especially silver. At the end of the account, however, he is out of town, from where he "sends" various amounts (III, ll. 13 and 19). The verbs used refer to transport overland or by sea. His frequent payments to a packer (I, l. 14. II, 4, 8. III, l. 8), as well as item II, l. 7, show him engaged in the export of flax, which, however, might have been one of many lines in which he was busy. A person or persons called Abu 'l-Khayr occur also in the contemporary accounts translated here, see no. 5, col. II, ll. 15-16, III, 17-18, no. 6, section C, 2, 24, no. 7, col. II c, l. 2.

The account is translated here because it illustrates the amazing prevalence of cash payments and almost complete absence of book transfer. Payment by *ruq'a*, or note, merely means that the customer had been advised by a note to make a payment to bearer, e.g. III, ll. 8 and 12, or that he himself had given such an order, II, l. 24. Only in the case of the promissory note mentioned in II, ll. 29-33, left side, is it possible to assume that it was executed by book transfer.

At least three Muslims (I, ll. 23 and 25, II, l. 24) and one Christian (I, l. 19, II, l. 2) provide purses or make payments. The same inter-denominational atmosphere is apparent in most of the other banking accounts preserved.

I

1	Balance to the debit of my lord, the elder Abu 'l-Khayr, after	
2	we have made our account: 516 $\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) and 1 q.	
3	Premium ¹⁾ for the exchange of 145 concentric ²⁾ Damascus d. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	
4	For 14 $\frac{1}{3}$ Tripoli (Lebanon) d. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ less 1 h.	
5	Premium for the exchange of 100 lined ³⁾ (d.)	19 $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
6	For 75 $\frac{1}{4}$ Tripoli d. and 1 dāniq in two sales	
7		65 $\frac{1}{3}$ less 1 h.
8	For 3 d. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ q. of Tripoli	3 d. 2 q. 1 h.
9	For 23 less 2 q. Miṣr d.	23 d. 10 q. 4)
10	For 50 $\frac{1}{4}$ Tripoli d.	44 less 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
11	Total 667 $\frac{1}{3}$ less 1 h.	
12	Against this, credited to him	1 d. in <i>waraq</i> silver
13	Cr. same	1 d. in <i>waraq</i>
14	Paid (by him) to the packer	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
15	Paid to me	$\frac{1}{2}$ d.

1) Only the premium is debited here on Abu 'l-Khayr. The exchange itself was included in the previous account referred to in ll. 1-2. See also p. 41, n. 5.

2) Coins the legends of which are arranged in concentric circles.

3) Coins the legends of which are arranged in straight lines.

4) The Fatimid dinar had a slightly higher value than the Murābiṭī, cf. *Med. Soc.* I, ch. III F.

16 Cr. a purse	3½ d.
17 Cr. a purse of "(the House of) the Blessing"	20 d.
18 Cr. a purse with his seal	9⅔ and 1 q.
19 Cr. a purse of 'Abd al-Masīh	13⅓, some broken
20 Cr. a purse with his seal	50 d.
21 Cr. a purse of "the Blessing"	9 d.
22 Cr. a purse with his seal	10 d.
23 Cr. a purse of al-Anṣārī	15 d. 1 q.
24 Cr. a purse of Mūsā ¹⁾)	6 d½ ¼
25 Cr. a purse of Muḥammad b. 'Alī	11 d. 2q.
26 Cr. a purse of Abū Naṣr in the Rice-house ²⁾)	11¼ d.
27 Cr. a purse with the seal of the Treasury	66⅓
28 Cr. a purse with his seal	...d.
29 Cr. a purse with the seal of. . .	10 d.
30 Cr. a purse with the seal of the Treasury	50 d.
31 Cr.	2⅔ d. 1 q.
32 Cr. a purse of Ben Darrāj	8½ ¼

II

1 Cr. a purse of Salīm	11 d ½ ¼
2 Cr. a purse of 'Abd al-Masīh	4¼ ⅓.
3 Cr. for waraq	⅔ ⅓ d.
4 Cr. Paid by him to the packer	⅔ and 1 q.
5 Cr. a purse with his seal	11 d. less ⅓
6 Cr. a purse with the seal of his neighbor	10 d. and. . .
7 Cr. for the price of Atfiḥī ³⁾) flax through the stranger	31 d. less. . .
8 Cr. Also paid to the packer	⅔ and 1 q.

1) See also II, l. 13. Most probably identical with the fledgling banker who wrote TS Arabic 30, f. 32. Cf. above p. 35.

2) Like the "House of Blessing," cf. I, ll. 17 and 21, one of the bourses of Fustat, originally destined for the trading of rice. Abū Naṣr was a common name. The person meant is defined here by the place where he had his office.

3) Spelled here *tḥyḥy*, a variety of flax frequently referred to, cf. MS I, ch. III E, n. 61. The customer had arranged for the purchase of the flax for Nahray and advised a foreign merchant to make the payment.

9 Cr. a purse with his seal	24 d., some broken
10 For 5 waraq dirhams ¹⁾	$\frac{1}{8}$ and 1 ḥ.
11 — (Total . . .)	$1\frac{1}{2}$ d. 1 q. 1 ḥ
12 Cr. also a purse with his seal	28 d. exactly
13 Cr. a purse from Mūsā	$5\frac{1}{3}\frac{1}{4}$
14 Cr. a purse of Abū Sahl ²⁾	5 less $\frac{1}{8}$
15 Total (of the 3 last lines)	$38\frac{1}{3}\frac{1}{8}$
16 The two totals 449 d. 1 ḥ.	
17 Balance ³⁾ to his debit 218 d. 2 q. 1 ḥ.	

18 Debit after this: Damascus d.	$155\frac{1}{2}$ d. 1 q., including 16 Miṣr d.
19 Dr. balance of a purse	3 d. less $\frac{1}{8}$
20 Dr.	5 d. less 1 q.
exchange ⁴⁾ loss on this item $7\frac{1}{2}$ q.	
21 Dr. also	$48\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{8}$ d. $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
22 Total 211 $\frac{2}{3}$ d., except the agio for him ⁵⁾	
23 ((Grand total 439 $\frac{2}{3}\frac{1}{8}$ less one dāniq))	

24 Cr. through a note to Abū Turāb	41 d., some broken
25 Cr. a purse with his seal	9 d. exactly
26 Cr. in a purse ⁶⁾	8 d. .
27 Cr. waraq silver	$\frac{1}{2}$ d.
28 Total: 58 d. $\frac{2}{3}$, some broken.	

29-33 right side: ((Cr. $\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{4}$)) $\frac{2}{3}\frac{1}{4}$, Cr. total 59 d. (($\frac{1}{3}$)) $\frac{1}{2}$ (($\frac{1}{4}$))

29-33 left side: Dr. Agio for 100 ⁷⁾ Damascus d. and 16 Miṣr: $1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{4}$.

Dr. Promissory note of Abū Zikrī b. Sighmār ⁸⁾ $41\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{4}$, to be added

1) This presupposes an exchange rate of 1 : 36.

2) Most probably identical with Nahrāy's brother-in-law bearing this name.

3) Deducted from $667\frac{1}{8}$ d. less 1 ḥ., above I, l. 11

4) It is not indicated which currency was exchanged here. Presumably Fatimid against Murābiṭī dinars.

5) Reading and translation doubtful. The text has *lah*, which means: "In his favor", as if the customer had made the exchange. Most probably *lahā* is to be read, meaning that the agio will be noted in the next account, cf. here p. 39, n. 1.

6) I.e., an unsealed purse.

7) Actually $139\frac{1}{2}$, cf. l. 18 ($155\frac{1}{2}$ less 16 = $139\frac{1}{2}$).

8) This is Judah b. Moses b. Sighmār, a Tunisian merchant who settled in Egypt.

to his debit, which is $439\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{8}$, less 1 dāniq.

(Written upside down from l. 29 to 32 between the two half-columns:) Total 481 d. 13 q., less 1 dāniq.

(Written on the right margin from l. 30 to 32):

Cr. $59\frac{1}{2}$ d. Balance debit 422 d. 1 q., less 1 dāniq. ¹⁾

III

- 1 Balance to his debit from this account
- 2 422 d. ((les two q.)) $2\frac{1}{2}$ h. ¹⁾
- 3 Dr. 5 dinars in dirhams which he (later) paid to Abu
- 4 'l-Bishr. Total 427 d. ((less 2 q.)) $2\frac{1}{2}$ h.
- 5 Cr. $\frac{1}{2}$ d. *warāq*. Cr. a purse of al-Baghdādī $66 \frac{1}{8}$ d.
- 6 and 3 purses 10 d. ((less))
- 7 ((And eight and 1 q. and $\frac{1}{8}$)) Cr. 1 d. in dirhams
- 8 Cr. paid to Ṣālīḥ the packer on order 1 d.
- 9 Cr. paid to Zighmār ²⁾ $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 10 Paid to Isma'īl $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in dirhams
- 11 Cr. paid to me $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. in dirhams
- 12 Cr. paid on order to Ben al-Manqūdī 1 d. 11 q.
- 13 Warāq to me 13 q. He sent with Ben Madqūr ³⁾ 26 d. less ((10))
1 q., some broken
- 14 Cr. paid to ben al-Kūfī sixty d.
- 15 Cr. 30 d. Total $200 \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{8}$ d. $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
- 16 ((He paid to the elder Abū Sulaymān Dā'ūd 200 d.))
- 17 Balance to his dr. 200 ((. . .))
- 18 26 d. 13 q. except the agio and the 5 d. in dirh.
- 19 He sent a purse with 200 assayed dinars
- 20 Balance dr. 26 d. 13 q. (Repeated from ll. 17-18:)
Total: 226 d. 13 q.

1) Since 1 q. contained 3 h. 's or 6 dāniqs, 1 q. less 1 dāniq = $2\frac{1}{2}$ h. Again an example for the medieval predelection for variety.

2) The name Sighmār, cf. p. 41, sometimes is written Zighmār.

3) Perhaps a copyist's misspelling of the name occurring in the preceding line.

5. FROM A BANKER'S LEDGER I

The Movement of Sealed Purses

TS NS J 198

Here we learn how larger payments were effectuated by a banker through an adroit combination of sealed purses of various sizes, which were complemented sometimes by a few loose dinars.

The sheet is written throughout in the hand of Nahray b. Nissim at his calligraphic best. It had been used before. On column III, ll. 5-6, Nahray's address appears, in Arabic characters, and in IV, ll. 5-8, the name of the sender, Farah b. Isma'il, who is probably identical with Nahray's partner Abū Surūr, mentioned in II, l. 3. For Abū Surūr, which means "Bringer of Happiness", was the kunya, or byname, of Farah, which means "Joy". On column II, ll. 16-25, i.e. on the bottom of the reverse side of the address, the following note is written in large Arabic characters: "Purses of the 'Arif and al-Māṭ house . . . from Farah, the jahbadh (government treasurer) as payment for the dīwān (office) al-Rafaḥī and the sums received in cash from 'Abd al-Salām, the supervisor of the construction of the government ships".

Thus the sheet in question had accompanied a payment to Nahray from two government agencies. Farah, the treasurer (the name of his father was Hiba) is described in another Geniza document as a very influential government official¹). The 'Arif was the senior money-changer, who acted as a supervisor over his colleagues²). Al-Māṭ-house, possibly an abbreviation of al-Anmāṭ, the Carpet-house, was one of the exchange marts of Fustat³). The purses of the 'Arif are mentioned throughout our account, the one of al-Māṭ-house in II, l. 8.

1) Bodl. ms. Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 9, ll. 23-27.

2) Cf. *Med. Soc.* I, ch. II (2).

3) The spelling *al-māṭ* is beyond doubt since it appears here both in Arabic and in Hebrew script and is found in this form in a document written in 1159, almost a hundred years after our ledger, TS 10 J 7, f. 6. The Carpet-house, *al-anmāṭ*, was well known, see Paul Casanova, *Essai de Reconstruction d'al Foustat*, Cairo 1913-1919, Index, s.v. and is spelled in one document *lanmāṭ*, Bodl. ms. Heb. e 94, f. 22.

The upper part of the sheet is damaged and most of the first three lines is lost. Consequently, it is also impossible to say, whether this sheet was paginated and part of an accountbook—as is likely in view of its orderly arrangement and calligraphic writing—or whether it was a draft prepared for a clerk. Anyhow, the sheet was folded so as to form four oblong columns (9 over 3,6 inches), as was usual in account books.

This ledger lists the cash transactions of Nahray. Persons and sums mentioned, as in I, 9-22, do not represent book transfers, but purses bearing the seals of those persons. This is proved by the recurrence of the same persons and sums with the remark “purse of . . .” in other parts of the account ¹⁾, by the references to broken dinars, as in I, 9, and by the conclusion of several sections with the item “Loose”, e.g. I, 11 and 16, which means that accounts which could not be made even with purses were complemented by single dinars and their fractions.

As in no. 4, no dates are indicated, which shows that the account covered only a short period. The entries are not exactly in chronological order, as may be seen from the fact that in I, 14-17, four purses are given as payment, which are described subsequently in ll. 19, 25 and 27 respectively as received. In general, however, expenditure follows receipt.

Almost all purses changed hands twice during the period covered in this account sheet. A little circle, rendered here by an asterisk, signifies that a purse noted as received has been used later on for a payment. This was done only in columns I and II, not in III and IV, although there, too, many purses are listed both as received and paid ²⁾. Likewise, on the right side of each of the sections of column I and in II, 9-10, 15-16, 20-21, a straight vertical line is carefully drawn, which

1) In our list, P indicates that an item is described as a purse after having been listed before only by name and amount.

2) For completeness sake, in our list an asterisk will be placed behind the number of each line where a purse mentioned elsewhere as received is listed as paid.

seems to indicate that the accounts concerned were settled. No such lines are found in columns III and IV.

A breakdown of the persons mentioned in our document according to their religion shows the amazing result that most of the persons providing Nahray with purses were Muslims, partly also Christians, and most of them seem to have been bankers themselves.

Muslims ¹⁾

(Abu 'l-) Bishr I, 15*, 23, 25 P

Abu 'l-Layth III, 8 P, IV, 1, 17*

(A)bū Rajā II, 10, 11*

'Alī al-Jundī ("the soldier") III, 8P, IV 9*

The 'Arīf(?) I, 2, 4, 5. II, 16. III, 2. IV, 10* (see II, 5), 11, 16*

Bishr—see Abu 'l-Bishr

Dubādīb ("a fat man talking with a loud voice") I, 9. II, 13*. III, 13, 24*

(The "boy" of) Ḥarb II, 10. III, 23*

Ibn 'Adas ("son of a mule") I, 2 (number not preserved), IV, 11

Ibn Qawqal ("son of a grouse") I, 22. II, 24-25*

(The "boy" of) Ma'sūm I, 21. IV, 14*

Nūḥ ²⁾ I, 21, IV 2, 16*

Al-Qārī ("Reader of the Koran") III, 19

Ramaḍān (the blessed Muslim month of fasting) I, 15*, 17, 27, 28 (twice). III, 22*

Yānis I, 3, 9, 27. III, 19. IV, 18* (from I, 9 and 27).

Christians

'Abd al-Masīḥ I, 14*, 19

Ibn al-Shirsī (pronunciation uncertain) II, 11 cf. Dozy, Supplément I, p. 744 a

1) One or two, such as Bishr or Yānis, might have been Christians. For the signs P and * see notes 1 and 2 on p. 44.

2) The biblical Noah, a name not used by Jews at that time, but common among Muslims.

Of Uncertain Affiliation

Abu 'l-Khayr II, 15, 16. III, 17*, 18*

Abū Naṣr I, 26 P. II, 12*

Abu 'l-Surūr I, 3

Abū Yūsuf I, 27. II, 9. III, 12, 14, 15

Al-Ahwāzī (from Ahwāz in southern Iran) II, 17-18

Al-Dhahabī ("The goldsmith") II, 15

Ibn Muhaddhib al-Dawla ¹⁾ I, 20. II, 12-13*. III, 11. IV, 12*

Ibn al-Rayyis ("son of the head-physician") IV, 4

Ibn al-Zaffān ("son of the buffoon") I, 16*, 25

Ibrāhīm of the House of Blessing III 21.

Maḥfūẓ II, 20-21. IV 3*, 19*

Ṣā'id I, 10. II, 24-25*

Ṣāliḥ I, 10. IV, 15P*

Yūsuf of Cairo I, 20. IV, 4*

Jews

Abū 'Alī I 18. III 7.

Abūn IV, 9

Azhar (often rendered by Hebrew Yā'ir) III, 11

Ibn al-Ḥazzān (son of the cantor) III, 23

Ibrāhīm ²⁾ I, 10, II, 6P*

Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā (most probably of the Tāhertī family) II, 22-23

The Kohen I, 3, 4, 16. II, 5. IV, 10* (cf. I, 3)

'Uqbān I, 28. II, 3 (known from Nahray's correspondence) Yeshū'ā
II, 6

1 Purses of Dimyā(tī). . . ³⁾

2 The 'Arīf* 13 less $\frac{1}{8}$. Ibn 'Adas . . .

3 The Kohen* 17. Yānis* $9\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{8}$

4 The Kohen* 7 exactly. The 'Arīf* $4\frac{2}{3}$.

1) This honorary title was borne not only by Muslims, but also by Jews, e.g. BM Or 5566 D, f. 11.

2) The biblical Abraham. This name could be Muslim, too. But in Nahray's accounts it refers to Abraham, the Son of the Scholar, cf. above, p. 31.

3) Family name derived from the town of Damietta.

- 5 The 'Arif* $5\frac{1}{8}$. . . * $2\frac{1}{4}$.
 6 Loose 20 less 7 q. Total $8\frac{3}{4}$ (d.) 7 q.
 7 (Received) for the Nizāriyya ¹⁾. Price: 56 less 2 q. Agio: 2 less
 8 5 (q.). Total $57\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) 1 q.
 9 He ²⁾ paid: Yānis $15\frac{1}{8}$. Dubādib* $8\frac{1}{8}$, deduction of 2 q.
 10 for broken ones. Šā'id* $11\frac{1}{2}$. Ibrahīm* $10\frac{1}{2}$.
 11 Treasury * 4. Loose ³⁾ $7\frac{1}{2}$.
 12 In *waraq* silver. 7q. Total $57\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) 1 q.
-

- 13 Paid for the Nizāriyya ⁴⁾.
 14 Treasury 120. 'Abd al-Masīḥ $15\frac{1}{8}$.
 15 Bishr 20. Ramaḍān $5\frac{1}{2}$.
 16 Ibn al-Zaffān 20 (d.) 2 q. Kohen and Loose 3 d. 5 q.
 17 Ramaḍān $15\frac{1}{2}$. Total 200 d. exactly.
-

- 18 Received from my brother-in-law Abū 'Alī $61\frac{1}{8}$, as follows:
 19 'Abd al-Masīḥ* $15\frac{1}{8}$. Treasury* 7 (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
 20 Ibn Muhadhdhib al-Dawla* $13\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q. Yūsuf of Cairo $6\frac{2}{3}$.
 21 Nūḥ of Cairo* 6 (d.) 2 q. Abū Ma'sūm * $4\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
 22 Ibn Qawqal * $4\frac{1}{2}$ d.
-

- 23 From Bishr, the banker, as payment for 2000 dirhams, at the
 24 price of 2. (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q. per 100. ⁵⁾ Total price $43\frac{1}{2}$.
 25 Purse of Abu 'l-Bishr* 20 d. Purse of Ibn al-Zaffān* 20 (d.) 2 q.
 26 Purse of Abū Naṣr of the Rice-house* ⁶⁾ 4 d. Balance for him $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
-

1) Coins minted under the caliph al-'Azīz (975-996), whose name at birth was Nizār, which appeared also on his coins.

2) Refers to a preceding section of the accountbook which has not been preserved. The following names refer to purses bearing the seals of the persons mentioned, see Introduction.

3) Not sealed in a purse.

4) A transaction different from the one described in l. 7 ff.

5) An exchange rate of 1: 40.57, see JESHO 8 (1965), p. 14, no. 21.

6) This Abū Naṣr had his office in the toll house and bourse thus called. Since the name was common, he is defined by his address.

27 From Abū Yūsuf. Ramaḍān* 15½ ¼. Yānis* 10 d.

28 Ramaḍān * 4½. Ramaḍān 5½ ½. For 'Uqbān ½

II

2 . . . 5 dinars of the West

3 . . . in partnership with my lord the elder Abu 'l-Surūr

4 67¼ ⅙ d. and agio 1 d.

(space of 3 lines left blank)

5 I owed ¹⁾: Purse of the Kohen 4½ ¼

6 Paid to R. Yeshū'a: Purse of Ibrahīm 10½ ¼

7 Treasury 4 d. Treasury 7 (d.) ½ q.

8 Al-Māṭ house 12½ ⅙. Total 34 (d.) 5½ q. In *waraq* 3 dirhams.

9 From Abū Yūsuf: Treasury purse* 8 ⅔ ⅙

10 Purse of the "boy" ²⁾ of Ḥarb* 8½. Purse of Bū Rajā 31 less 2 q.

11 Paid to Ibn al-Shirsī: Purse of Abū (!) Rajā 31 less 2 q.

12 Abū Naṣr of the Rice-house 4 d. Ibn Muhadhdhib al-Dawla,

13 loss of 1½ q. deducted, 13⅔ (d.) ½ q. Dubādib 8 (d.) 1½ q.

14 In *waraq* 7½ q. Total 57 d. ½ q.

15 From al-Dhahabī: Purse of Abu 'l-Khayr al-Tammār* ³⁾ 30 d.

16 Abu 'l-Khayr* 8½ d. The 'Arif * 20 d. Total 58½

17-19 For the silver from al-Ahwāzī—: Purse of the House of Blessing
4½ (d.) 17½ q.

20 Purse of Maḥfūz* 5 (d.) less 1½ q.

22-23 Paid to the Flax-house for Ibrahīm b. Mūsā:

24-25 Ṣā'id 11½ ⅙. Ibn Qawqal 4½. In silver 1 q.

1) Text: *kān 'indī*, literally; "I had". But "*ind*" in an account means "to the debit of".

2) In the meaning of "employee".

3) Family name, meaning "date merchant". The reading of the last letter is not sure.

III

- 1 . . .
- 2 Purse of the 'Arif . . .
- 3-4 I sent with 'Uqbān 50 d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ q. . . 54 d.
- 5-6 Address in Arabic characters, see Introduction
- 7 From Abū 'Alī¹⁾ for the Mustanşiriyya²⁾:
- 8 Purse of 'Alī al-Jundī 25. Purse of Abu 'l-Layth 12 $\frac{1}{2}$
- 9 Yūsuf of Cairo 4. Ibn Muhadhdhib 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q., broken.
- 10 Şālih 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ (d.) $\frac{1}{2}$ q.
-
- 11 From Azhar: Ibn Muhadhdhib al-Dawla 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
-
- 12 From the elder Abū Yūsuf: Purse of the Treasury* 18 (d.) 11 (q.)
- 13 Dubādib 5 (d.) 14 q.
- 14 Purse with his seal 75 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
-
- 15 Paid to the elder Abū Yūsuf: Purse of the Treasury 18 (d.) 11 (q)
- 16 Purse 2 d. 10 q. Total 21 d. less $\frac{1}{8}$.
-
- 17 Paid to the Flax-house: Purse of Abu 'l-Khayr 30d.
- 18 Purse of Abu 'l-Khayr 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
-
- 19 From al-Qārī: Purse of Yānis 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{8}$
-
- 20 Paid to Rosetta and al-Mukhtāra³⁾ 8 (d.) 19 q.
-
- 21 Paid to the Mānak house: Ibrahīm of the (House of) Blessing⁴⁾
7 d.
- 22 Ramaḍān 4 $\frac{1}{3}$. Balance Dr. $\frac{1}{8}$.
-
- 23 Paid to Ibn al-Ḥazzān: purse of the "boy" of Ḥarb 8 $\frac{1}{2}$
- 24 Dubādib 5 (d.) 14 (q.). Total 14 (d.) 2 q.
-

1) Nahray's brother-in-law, see I, l. 18.

2) Coins minted under the then ruling caliph al-Mustanşir (1036-1094).

3) I.e., sent to these towns for the payment of tolls for Nahray's shipments.

4) What has been said p. 47, n. 6 applies here as well.

IV

- 1 (((Ab)ū 'l-Layth 12½))
 - 2 ((Nūḥ of Cairo 6 (d.) 2 q.))
 - 3 (((Maḥ)fūz 5 (d.) less 2 q.)) Purse of the Treasury 40 less 1 q.
 - 4 Purse of Yūsuf of Cairo 7 less 2 q.
 - 5 Ibn Muhadhdhib 3 less 10. (Also left side of address, see Introduction).
 - 6 Total 49 (d.) 14 (q.), plus gold 10 q. Total 50 d.
 - 7 Balance in his favour 35½ ¼
 - 8 85 (Address continued).
 - 9 Paid to R. Abūn: (Purse of) 'Alī al-Jundī 25d.
 - 10 The Kohen of the (House of) Blessing ¹⁾ 17 d. The 'Arīf 20 d.
 - 11 Ibn 'Adas 12 less 2 q. ((The 'Arīf 4 ⅔)).
 - 12 ((Ibn al-Muhadhdhib ²⁾ al-Dawla 6½. Total 85 d.))
 - 13 Total 74 (d.) less 2 q.
-
- 14 Paid to Ibn al-Rayyis for the bracelet: Ma'sūm's "boy" 4⅔ ⅓ (d.) ½ q.
-
- 15 Paid for the captives ³⁾: Purse of Šālīḥ 2½ (d.) ½ q.
 - 16 Nūḥ 6 (d.) 2 q. The 'Arīf 4⅔
-
- 17 For the captives: Abu'l-Layth 12½
 - 18 Yānis, two purses 19½ ⅓
 - 19 Maḥfūz 5 (d.) less 1½ q.
 - 20 Total 37 (d.) 1½ q.

It is noteworthy that the coins of the then ruling caliph al-Mustansir were bought as a separate item, III, 7. Thus, the dinars in which all the

1) See p. 49, n. 4.

2) The writer originally intended to shorten the title and therefore wrote the article (*al-Muhadhdhib*). Since he deleted the whole passage he did not care to strike out *al* after adding *al-Dawla*. Grammatical monstrosities such as *al-Muhadhdhib al-Dawla* were not common in Nahray's time.

3) This sum of over 40 dinars was not donated by Nahray, but sent by him as a banker on order of the community. The money was usually needed in Alexandria, where the pirates sold the persons captured by them.

accounts were made seem to have been Murābiṭīs, as we had also assumed with regard to no. 4. In view of this, it stands to reason that these accounts are from Nahray's later years, probably the 1080's.

Many purses were provided by the Treasury, *bayt al-māl*, I, 11, 14, 19. II, 7 (twice*, see I, 11 and 19), 9. III, 12, 15*. Some also by the various exchange marts, and payments were made to the latter: the House of Blessing, II, 17-18; the Flax-house, II, 22-23, III, 17; the Mānak-house (often mentioned in the Geniza documents), III, 21; and al-Māṭ-house, which we have already discussed. This shows that the marts were not only localities where business was done and where people had their offices, cf. p. 47, note 6, but agencies which acted as business firms.

6. FROM A BANKER'S LEDGER II

Accounts of a Moneylender

Papyrus-Sammlung No. 917
University Library, Heidelberg

The movement of sealed purses was illustrated by no. 5. The following account shows the use made of them when they were opened and their content was put into circulation. The accounts are again in the handwriting of Nahray b. Nissim, and once more an old letter in Arabic characters, this time addressed to "my brother, the illustrious 'Arif¹⁾ b. 'Alī, the Israelite", is used. On the first page, two accounts (A and B), written between the lines of the Arabic letter, deal with goods. The third (C), written in an orderly fashion on the space left free on the top of the page, as well as the first column (D) on the reverse side are banker's accounts and are rendered here in full. The second column on that page (E) is partly effaced, but also deals with monetary transactions and, therefore will be considered by us as far as deciphered.

1) About the 'Arif in Nahray's time see above p. 43. This 'Arif was Jewish.

The sheet is folded so as to form four columns of the oblong format common in accounts (here 10,4 over 3,8").

This is a list of payments effectuated by the banker. Each section starts with the amount contained in a purse or otherwise destined for expenditure (C, 1. D, 1, 8, 13. E, 2, 27) and then lists the persons to whom payments were made and exactly how much they received. In a few instances, larger payments either to persons or for commodities are noted (C, 4, 13, 23. D, 8, 26. E, 15), and there are two payments to Nahray's factotums Sālim and Hiba (D, 22). The other entries concern limited amounts up to six dinars, all debited to Muslims or Christians.

In most cases—47, as far as the ms. could be read—1 d. less 1 q., or their multiplies were paid, see Table I. With the exception of D, 2 and 15, for which the annotations may be consulted, the purpose of the payments is nowhere indicated. Since the names of all the 38 customers concerned are non-Jewish ¹⁾, a case of money-lending against concealed interest must be involved. We assume that the difference between the nominal and the actual weight constituted the banker's profit. As is suggested by other accounts ²⁾, the customer deposited a piece of jewellery or a vessel made of a precious material with the banker and then took out money whenever he needed it. Our account, which is concerned solely with the actual expenditure, does not indicate for which period the interest of 1 q. per 1 d. (1/24, or about 4%) was paid. It is natural that the banker did not always have at his disposal dinars weighing 23 qīrāṭs, although he certainly kept coins which he had assorted according to that weight in one of his drawers. Since each customer made a number of withdrawals—in the account discussed here, fifteen out of 38 appear with more than one—adjustments could be made at subsequent payments. Our table II shows how this worked in the case of a customer who appears here ten times. There must have been also a higher interest rate, amounting to an average of 2 or 2½ q. per dinar. This is evident from single entries, such as C 11, E 3, 5, 10,

1) One or two of the 38 names might have been borne by Jews, such as 'Alī and Abū 'Alī. At least 34 are definitely non-Jewish.

2) Cf. no. 7.

and the average of four entries to one person shown in table III.

There remains an apparent numismatic puzzle. In three cases (C, 9, 14. E, 11), customers receive one qīrāṭ each. Murābiṭ silver qīrāṭs were then on the market ¹⁾, but this could not be meant here, for our accounts definitely represent payments made with gold out of purses. Likewise, book transfer is out of the question, for we deal here with actual payments. Thus the coins in question must have been "broken dinars". Such broken dinars were sold in Nahray's time for $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{8}$ q. respectively, see *Med. Soc.* I, ch. III, Appendix B, sec. 6.

The less common Coptic names are rendered here without vowels as they appear in the original text.

C

- 1 Expended, first: $352\frac{1}{2}$ (d.) 1 ḥ.
- 2 (Added in small script:) Except the purse of Abu 'l-Khayr, which was returned to him
- 3 in its entirety. It was *waraq* silver. All the *waraq* (was returned).

4 The agent ²⁾ 200 $\frac{1}{4}$	TWDR, first payment ³⁾ 8 d.
5 Idris <i>first payment</i> , 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$ (i.e. 4q.).	The (Muslim) judge 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$ (3q.)
6 Idris 1 d. less 1ḥ.	Qumqum $\frac{1}{8}$ (d.) 1 ḥ.
7 Packer $5\frac{1}{2}$ q.	Two fūṭas ⁴⁾ $1\frac{1}{8}$ d.
8 Za'farān 1d. less 1q.	Abū Dā'ūd 9q.
9 The judge 2d.	TY'DR 1q.
10 The master of the bath 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$	Haffāz 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$
11 Riḍwān 1 d. less 1q.	Qāsim 1d. less 2q

1) Cf. Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, pp. 236 and 326.

2) This government agent is referred to again in D, 13. where his name Ibn 'Allān is given, and also in E, 28 and 32. The Ibn 'Allān were an important Jewish family from Tunisia, which settled in Egypt.

3) Other payments to TWDR in C, 13, D, 14, 15, 19.

4) A piece of clothing wound around the lower part of the body.

12	Turāb ¹⁾ $\frac{1}{2}$ d	Bukhturī $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
13	TWDR 28 less $\frac{1}{4}$	Idrīs $2\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$
14	Qumqum 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$	Idrīs 1q.
15	Judge (!) 1d. less 1q.	Zayd 1d. less 1q.
16	Ḥākīm 1d. less 1q.	Sahl 1d. less 1q.
17	Yūnus 1d. $1\frac{1}{2}$ q.	MRQS (Marcus) 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$.
18	BHBSHYM 6d. less $\frac{1}{4}$ (6q.)	FRH'M 2 less 2q.
19	KLYDS 1d. less 1 ḥ.	Abu 'l-Sarī 3 less 1q.
20	Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallah 2d. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ q.	
21	Abū Ḥabīb 6 less $\frac{1}{4}$ (6q.)	
22	KTWN 2 less 2q.	
23	Ḥumayd 41 $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{8}$	
24	Abu 'l-Khayr 3. $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 ḥ.	
25	Total 354 $\frac{1}{2}$ 1q.	

D (verso)

- 1 Expenditure from the Purse of Dā'ūd: Shāfi' 1d. . . .
- 2 Abū Jamīl to Sa'īd 3 fullweighty d. He owed him for honey 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$ ²⁾.
- 3 Ropes ³⁾ 1d. Exchanged (to silver) 1d. less $\frac{1}{8}$.
- 4 (Muslim) Preacher $\frac{1}{4}$ (d.) 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ (q.) Preacher $\frac{1}{4}$ (d.) 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ (q.) (i.e. total
11 $\frac{1}{2}$ q.)
- 5 Preacher 1d. less 2ḥ. Salāma 6 less $\frac{1}{4}$ (6q.)
- 6 Muṣṣrim 6d. less $\frac{1}{8}$ (3q.) Salāma 2 less 2q.
- 7 Exchange 2 less 1q. Total 23d. less 5 (q.) 1ḥ.

1) An abbreviation of Abū Turāb, perhaps identical with the person mentioned in no. 4, col. II, l. 24. Originally an honorary title of the caliph 'Alī it became a Muslim name.

2) Abū Jamīl had a deposit account with Nahray. He advised him to pay to one Sa'īd 3d. less 1/8 for honey. Abū Jamīl and Sa'īd certainly had many dealings, which he settled through Nahray's bank. Therefore Nahray did not care to overpay by 1/8, since he would balance this at a future payment (or else Sa'īd had owed this trifle to his customer before.)

3) The ropes were needed for Nahray's bales of consignments.

- 8 Expenditure from the purse of Ya'qūb and Mūsā: (In small letters)
MRQS 16 (d.) in number, 15 in weight. 1d. returned. Received and
delivered.
- 9 Packers 5 less 5q. Idrīs 1d. less 1q. 2q.)
- 10 Ṣafāda 2d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ (d.) 1q. The sons of 'Abd al-Ṣamad 2 less
- 11 Preacher $\frac{1}{4}$ (d.) 5q. ¹⁾ One quarter returned to him ²⁾.
- 12 Total without the quarter returned 25d. less $\frac{1}{4}$.
-
- 13 The Purse of Ibn 'Allān, the Agent: 45d. Naṣrūn $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 14 Idrīs 2 less 2q. TWDR 1d. less 1q.
- 15 Al-'Aṭūfī $\frac{1}{4}$ (d.) TWDR to Abū Ḥabīb ³⁾ 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$
(3q.)
- 16 'Alī 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$. Abū 'Alī 2d. less 2q.
- 17 The Judge 4d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ (4q.) Ibn Bukhturī 1d. less 1ḥ.
- 18 Brokers ⁴⁾ 1d. less 1q. Exchange for Sarjīs of 1d. less 1q.
1 ḥ.
- 19 TWDR 1d. less 1q. . . . was returned by Abū Dā'ūd.
- 20 BHBSHYM 1d. less 1q. 'Abd al-Ṣamad for al-Būṣīrī 1 q.
- 21 Exchange 1d. less 1q. For bartīl ⁵⁾ and freight of the boat 2 less 1q.
- 22 Sālīm 5q. Hiba 2d. 2q. ⁶⁾
- 23 Idrīs 3 less $\frac{1}{8}$ (3q.) less 1ḥ. Exchange 1d. less 2 ḥ.
- 24 Idrīs 1d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ q. Ṣafāda 20q.
- 25 To his credit 1d. less 2 ḥ. . .l. 1d. less 1q.
- 26 Canvas ⁷⁾ 22 less 1q. BQY. (Buqayr?) 1d. less 1d.
- 27 Al-Būṣīrī 1d. less 1q. The sons of 'Abd al-Ṣamad 1d. less 1q.
- 28 Total 115d. less $\frac{1}{4}$ ⁸⁾.

1) See above D, 4, where the sum is 11 $\frac{1}{2}$, not 11q., like here. We see that in each case actual weights are noted.

2) I.e. a quarter with which he had been debited before, but which he had not taken.

3) Again an order of payment, as discussed above, p. 54, n. 2.

4) It seems, an abbreviation for "the head of the brokers" or the like.

5) Literally "bribe", but at that time a small payment made to the captain of a ship in addition to the fare and freight.

6) Nahray's factotums, see Introduction.

7) This is a very large sum for canvas, which served for overseas transport.

8) This sum does not include the amount paid for the canvas.

Table I

Payments of 1 Dinar less 1 Qirāt or their Multiples

- 5 payments of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ q. (4 to same person) D, 4, 4, 11. E, 32, 33.
 17 payments of 1d. less 1q. C, 8, 11, 15, 15, 16, 16. D, 9, 14, 18, 19, 20,
 25, 27, 27. E, 4, 14, 29.
 9 payments of 2d. less 2q. C, 18, 22, D, 6, 10, 14, 16. E, 2, 12, 27.
 2 payments of $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. less $2\frac{1}{2}$ q. C, 20. 2q. 1ḥ E, 13.
 8 payments of 3d. less 3q. C, 5, 10, 10, 14, 17. D, 15, 16, 23 (less 1ḥ.)
 2 payments of 4d. less 4q. D, 17, E, 31 (BHBSHYM).
 1 payment of 5d. less 5q. D, 9.
 3 payments of 6d. less 6q. C, 18, 21. D, 5.
-

47 payments

Table II

Payments to Idrīs (a Muslim)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3d. less 4q. C, 5. | 2d. less 2q. D, 14 |
| 1d. less $\frac{1}{3}$ q. C, 6 | 3d. less $2\frac{2}{3}$ q. D, 23 |
| 3d. less 6q. C, 13 | 1d. less $\frac{1}{2}$ q. D, 24 |
| 1q. C, 14. | 2d. less 5q. E, 27 |
| 1d. less 1q. D, 9 | 3 in number E, 29 |
- The average discount : 1q. per 1d., i.e. $\frac{1}{24}$.

Table III

Payments to Ṣafāda

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 2d. less 5q. D, 10 | 2d. less 6q. E, 4 |
| 1d. less 4q. D, 24 | 2d. less 2q. E, 12 |
- The average discount: $2\frac{1}{2}$ q. per 1d.

7. ACCOUNT FOR A MERCHANT-BANKER

TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215

This short account conveys an excellent picture of the activities of a merchant-banker, Abū Sahl, Nahray b. Nissīm's brother-in-law, for whom it was written. Abū Sahl was a money changer, who specialised in high value silver dirhams and old and exotic gold currencies. No other Geniza account contains so many references to *nugra* silver, called here also by the strange name "golden silver", as this one, cf. p. 58, n. 2. Moneylending must have been another line of Abū Sahl, and one of considerable dimensions, as is proved by the valuable pawns deposited with him. He had sold them either because the persons concerned had renounced them or perhaps had left the city altogether. Their price was paid during his absence. A bucket worth 74 dinars deserves particular attention (II, 1-2). This must have been a bronze vessel inlaid with figures or other decorations in silver of the type we still admire in our museums. Orders of payment coming in for Abū Sahl or issued by him are also noted.

As to goods, we meet with the usual variety. Commodities as different as wool, tin and hazelnut—the first exported from Egypt, the second coming from Spain, and the third imported from Syria—were traded by Abū Sahl in considerable quantities.

Nahray conducted his brother-in-law's accounts during a short absence, cf. I, 2 ("The purses he *left*") and IV, 10 ("Debited after his arrival"). From III, 2-3, where Nahray pays to his brother-in-law rent for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, one can derive the erroneous conclusion that our account was concerned with such a long period. Fortunately, we are informed about this detail from another source. After his marriage, Nahray, who was a native of Tunisia, took residence in the family mansion of his brothers-in-law in Fustat. After some time, it appeared that the young couple occupied more space than warranted by the share left to his wife by her father (it was one sixth of the house). Therefore, Nahray agreed to pay to Abū Sahl, on whose premises he encroached,

a monthly rent of one dinar¹). The payment listed here is from the time of that agreement and to be understood as retroactive. The period for which our account was made must have been short, two to three months, for people used to travel during summertime and there is only one item for the purchase of wheat and e.g. none for that of grapes (for the preparation of wine), an item appearing regularly in letters and accounts around August, and, above all, the account contains no date. Had it concerned more than one year, references to preceding years would not have been absent.

The account is written on a sheet forming four pages of small book size ($5\frac{1}{2}$ over 4"), as Nahray used in his commercial papers.

I

- 1 Cr. to my lord the elder Abū Sahl, the Son of the Kohen—may God
make his honored position permanent
- 2 The price of all he left in 6 purses 68½ ¼ (d.)
- 3 The price of 94½ golden silver pieces²) 5⅔ d.
- 4 The price of 103 brought by Abū 'Alī³)
- 5 of which I have received the price of 65 dirhams, namely, 4d.
- 6 The balance to the debit of Abū 'Alī 38 dirh.
- 7 To his debit also 200 dirh.
- 8 Same, first payment through his paternal uncle 200 dirh.
- 9 Same, balance of 272 dirh.
- 10 Total weight 869½
- 11 Debit on Abū 'Alī through Ibn al-Sukkārī⁴) 17 dirh. for 1d., 1d.
(one line left free)

1) See *Medit. Soc.*, Vol. III, ch. viii, A, 3.

2) Text: *fiḍḍat dhahab*. This "golden silver" must be identical with *nuqra*, or full, silver, as the identical exchange of 1 : 17 proves. It cannot correspond to *electron*, since this coin alloy contains far more gold than warranted by the price indicated here. See below, I, l. 15, and II, ll. 6-7.

3) Nahray's other brother-in-law, cf. above, p. 47, I, l. 18.

4) Here and in the following line about four partly effaced words were added, it seems, in another pen.

12 Cr. price of the pawns deposited by the Preacher ¹⁾	18 $\frac{1}{3}$ d.
13 Cr. balance of payment for two pots of 'Alī	7 $\frac{1}{3}$ d.
14 Cr. price of 438 silver dirh., after the loss of two dirh., which had	
15 fallen off. ²⁾ Price 17 dirh. per dinar	25 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
16 Cr. (Torn away)	.. $\frac{2}{3}$ (d.) 3q.

II

1 Cr. from the price of the bucket	67 d. (($\frac{2}{3}$ 1q))
2 Cr. balance from the sale of the bucket	7d.
3 ((³⁾ Cr. from my master Abū 'Imrān))	17. d. $\frac{1}{2}$ q.))
4 ((Balance of an account))	
5 Cr. for a pair of of anklets	20 d. less $\frac{1}{4}$
6 Cr. for the sale of 94 dirh. <i>nuqra</i>	
7 from the rest of the silver. Price 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ (dirh. for 1d.) 5d. 11q.	
(A) <i>t?rsymb</i> ⁴⁾ remained from it.	
8 For 208 (d.) 5q. Nizāriyya ⁵⁾	219 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
9 There remained a bag ⁶⁾ of them to be exchanged with the elder Abū Sa'd	

1) This Muslim preacher, *wā'iz*, gives real sermons and is different from the *khaṭīb*, who reads the more formal *khuṭba*, or address, during the Friday prayer. A *khaṭīb* is repeatedly mentioned in no. 6, above.

2) The sum concerned had been 440 dirhams, but there had been a *naḡḡ*, a kind of small loss not yet identified, amounting to 2 dirhams.

3) Crossed out probably because this balance had been settled elsewhere.

4) *Tarsīm* is a fine to be paid for delay in the payment of a promissary note. But none is mentioned here and the suffix *b* does not refer to any preceding word. One can hardly assume that Nahray intended to write *tarmīsa*, the old *tremissis*, or one third of a gold piece, which Greek-Latin loanword is anyhow found normally only in Hebrew texts.

5) Coins minted under the caliph al-'Azīz (975-996), i.e. about eighty years before our account. See above, *passim*.

6) Text *kīr*, which is not normally used in the Geniza documents of this period for "purse" (called *ṣurra* in the Mediterranean area).

10 Cr. received from Ibn al-Sukkārī for the wool ¹⁾	13 1½ d.
11 Cr. from Sulaymān, the Spanish goldsmith	1 d. less 2ḥ.
12 Total 619d. 5q.	
13 Cr. in number ²⁾ 9d. 1q. and 4 fragments. Remaining.	
14 ((Cr. Price of hazelnuts 37. d.)) ³⁾	
15 Cr. the purse of Ibn Nājiya for the sale of the purses with	
16 the mad ⁴⁾ (dinars) and those with intricate script	28d. 1q.
17 Cr. for a note from Ibn Bahl(ūl)	22d.?

III

1 Cr. Profit from the tin	5d.
2 Cr. two and a half years rent in the house	30d.
3 Total 713d. 7q.	
4 Debit, as summed up ⁵⁾	133⅔(d.) 1q.
5 Balance in his favour	579⅓ ¼ d.
6 Dr. for the house behind the synagogue ⁶⁾	1d.
7 Dr. for the poll tax ⁷⁾	1d.

1) Ibn al-Sukkārī, "the Son of the Sugar-merchant", a common family name. He appeared also above I, 11. As the specification below, III, 12-16 shows, the money for this very large sale of wool did not come in at once, but arrived through different channels, presumably from a number of customers. If we assume that the price of wool here was approximately the same as in TS Arabic 30, f. 255, l. 10 which was slightly later, namely 6 dinars per qinṭār, over 20 qinṭārs were sold by Abū Sahl.

2) All the entries in this account are according to weight. This payment, which contained fragments of dinars was only counted. Since there were no coins of 1 *qirāṭ* (or, at least, we do not know of any), we must assume that certain fragmentary dinars were traded as such, see above, p. 53.

3) Cf. IV, 5 and 18. Abū Sahl first had given an order to pay for this item and then withdrew the order.

4) Text: *al-jānn*, it seems a term for "exotic". The coins of this period, both Fatimid and Murābiṭ, bore legends in monumental Kūfī characters. There were, however, Sijilmāsa quarters, minted under the Murābiṭ ruler Yūsuf b. Tashfin (1087-1106), which were half in Naskhī and might have looked rather intricate, cf. Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, p. 103, no. 91 and Plate I. Perhaps coins with such script were minted also by Yūsuf's predecessor.

5) In a previous account.

6) Alms given to people living there and promised by Abū Sahl before his departure.

7) Poll tax of the poor, as in IV, l. 1.

8	Dr. price of half a mann of spikenard ¹⁾	10q.
9	Dr. his note to Abū 'Alī	20d. less 2q.
10	((Dr. note handed to Isma'il for a purse of the Treasury loose gold (One line left blank)	30½ ¼d. 20d.))
12	Specification of the sale of the (dinars) received from Ibn al-Sukkārī ²⁾	
13	Through Abū 'Imrān 17 less ½q.	18d.
14	Through myself 12 less 1½q.	12½
15	Through Abū 'Alī 96½ ⅙	95 (d.) 2q.
16	Through (Torn away)	5d.
17	(Torn away) half a din. Total 131¼	

IV

1	Dr. for the poor for the poll tax	1d.
2	((Dr. price of two cloaks for Umm Abī . . .	1½d.))
3	((Dr. for the rent of a store room	1d.))
4	Dr. for two sacks ³⁾ of wheat and their transport	2d. less ⅓
5	Dr. for 3 loads of hazelnuts in the house of al-Anṣārī ⁴⁾	34d.
6	and for the "boys" (officials)	6 dirh.
7	commission and weigher ((included in)) in addition to the price	½ ⅓ (d.)
8	rose-water and (Chinese) rhubarb ⁵⁾	((½ ⅓))
9		5½q.

1) This drug, which comes from the mountains of Nepal, was used against fits of hysteria and epilepsy, cf. M. A. H. Ducros, *Le Droguier Populaire Arabe* etc., Cairo 1930, p. 74.

2) This refers to II, l. 10, cf. p. 60, n. 1. The first two items (lines 13 and 14) refer to dinars which had a slightly higher value than the standard dinar in which this account is made, the third one (l. 15) concerns an opposite case.

3) *Tillīsayn*. This is a sack made of palm leaves and containing 150 pounds of wheat, see W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse* etc., Leiden, 1955, 51.

4) This man, who appears repeatedly in Nahrāy's accounts (e.g. above, no. 4, I, 23), kept a place for the sale of fruit imports.

5) Chinese rhubarb, a drug coming from North-West China or Tibet, served as a popular tonic and purgative and frequently appears in the Geniza, as it does here, in small quantities, i.e. used for the household, not for commercial purposes, cf. Ducros (see n. 1), p. 61. Rose-water, of course, was added to many medicines.

10	Dr. after his arrival through my master Abū 'Imrān	
11	Purse of the House of Blessing	5 od.
12	Purse of Ibn Muhadhdhib al-Dawla ¹⁾	38 less 1½ q.
13	Purse of the Treasury	15½ ¼
14	Total 103½ (d.) 1½ q.	
15	Purse of Hiba al-Khashaba	5 1½
16	Total 155 (d.) 1½ q.	
17	Dr. handed over to him purse of. . . (torn away)	
18	Dr. balance from the price of the hazelnut. . . ()	

8. A GREAT MERCHANT SETTLES ACCOUNTS WITH HIS BANKER

India Book 316 TS NS 321, f. 7a

This account is in the unmistakable handwriting of Abū Zikrī Kohen, a representative of merchants of Old Cairo and a prominent India trader ²⁾. It refers to his dealings with the banker Khiyār b. Nissīm in the year 1134. The Geniza has preserved other items illustrating the financial relations between the two men. In November 1131, the two concluded a partnership (for the duration of one year) in a banking business with Abū Zikrī as senior partner, who alone was entitled to grant loans ³⁾. There exist also twenty orders of payments, ranging from 1¼ through 100 dinars given by Abū Zikrī to Khiyār in the month of Av (July-August) 1140, and one from the following year ⁴⁾. At that time, Khiyār had become Abū Zikrī's main banker through whom he conducted his day-to-day business.

Columns I and II contain Khiyār's debits, i.e. Abū Zikrī's payments to him or made for him, columns III and IV—his credits. Since the latter naturally consisted mostly of smaller sums, this list was longer

1) Cf. above no. 5, p. 46, n. 1.

2) *India Book*, ch. Va.

3) *Ibid.*, no. 325.

4) *Ibid.*, no. 137 and 229d.

and continued on consecutive pages which are lost. As far as it has been preserved, the account should be read in the following order:

I, ll. 1-14 lists Abū Zikrī's first series of payments, which totalled $125\frac{1}{2}$ dinars. Unlike the usual routine, the amount is not indicated here, but appears on column IV, 10, where Khīyār's credits are provisionally summarized as amounting to $96\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{8} \frac{1}{8}$, less $1/144$ dinars. The balance of 28 dinars, 5 qīrāṭs (specified here as $\frac{1}{8}$ dinar plus two q.s), and $1/144$ d., is listed again in I, 15-16, where it heads the second series of payments by Abū Zikrī. The second total of Khīyār's debits amounts to $102\frac{3}{4}$ d. less $1/72$, to which a single item of 7 d. is added. Here, a balance was carried over from the part of the credit account lost to us, followed by a third series of payments by Abū Zikrī, this time not in cash, as in the two first series, but all in promissory notes drawn on him by Khīyār. Whether Abū Zikrī made these payments for Khīyār in cash or in book transfer is not evident.

Our account seems to show that Abū Zikrī, despite his highly honored position in the merchants' community, refrained from making overdrafts. He was also careful not to let his money idle, obviously depositing immediately payments received. It must have been customary to settle accounts at short intervals, perhaps once a month.

I

1	The Elder Khīyār b. Nissīm	
2	Balance to his debit after all	
3-4	accounts to the tenth of Sha'bān (5) 28 (equivalent to June 6, 1134)	
5-6		75 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
7	Dr.	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
8	Dr.	20 less 5q.
9	Dr. Through his son (or: brother)-in-law	9 d.
10	Dr. from me	5 $\frac{1}{8}$ d.
11-12	Dr. from the elder Abu 'l-Faḍā'il	5 d.
13	Dr. from Zikrī	3 d.
14	Dr. from the same	1 d. 10q.

(The total of 125½d. is not indicated here, but one line was left for the purpose)

15 28.5 (in Coptic numerals)

Balance to his debit ¹⁾ 28 d. 5q. 1 dāniq

16 Dr. from me in gold ²⁾ 17¼ ⅙

17 And in silver 11d.

18 Dr. gold and silver 20 d. 13½q

19 Also in dirhams 1d.

II

1 Dr. from me in gold 22d. 2q.

2 Dr. Note 1½d.

3 Dr. from my cousin 1d.

4 (In another, thick pen) 102 ½ ¼d. less 1 h.

5 Dr. Beginning: his note on 7 d.

6 (In small letters. Total) 109⅔d.

7 (In small letters) Balance of debit 14d. 1q.

8 (In bold letters) Balance Dr. 14d. ⅔ ³⁾

9 Dr. his note 100 d.

10 Dr. his note 66d. 9q.

11 Dr. his note 36 d.

12 Dr. his note 30d. less ⅙

13 Dr. his note 26d.

(the rest of the page, about 8 lines, left blank)

III

1 The Elder Khīyār b. Nissīm ⁴⁾

1) See column IV, 12 and the Introduction.—The Coptic numerals for 20 and 8 are written in one line and that for 5 a little higher up, but between the two.

2) The Hebrew numerals 17 are written above this line.

3) The slight difference between lines 7 and 8 is to be explained best by the fact that Abū Zikrī first wrote the number out of his memory, but looked through the account before beginning his new series of entries.

4) The Arabic letter *d*, followed by a curved stroke, appears here, it seems an abbreviation for *dāmat* *ʿizzuhū*, “may his honored position be permanent.”

2 Credit beginning: a note	9½ ⅓d.
3 Cr. paid to Abu 'l-Munā	1d.
4 Cr. note to Abu 'l-Munā	4d.
5 Cr. to our lord ¹⁾	15d. exactly
6 Cr. note to Joseph	10d. exactly
7 Cr. price of. . .	9⅔ ¼d.
8 Cr. to the ḥazzān ²⁾	17(or 16)q.
9 Cr. to the Nezer ³⁾	1 d.
10 Cr.	19 q.
11 Cr.	23 dirhams
12 Cr. to the ḥazzān	1d. 7q.
13 Cr. balance of (the price of) the slave girl	1d.
14 Cr. to Musallam	7 dirhams
15 Cr. note	1d.
16 Cr. note	10d. exactly
17 Cr. price of wheat ⁴⁾	140 dirhams
18 Cr. note to B. al'Abd	3d.
19 Cr. to al-Qaṣṭallānī	3¼d
20 Cr. price of grapes ⁴⁾	5 d 1q.
21 Cr. to Musallam	120 dirhams
22 Cr. a note	4d 2q.

IV

1 Cr. a note	2⅓d.
2 Cr. a note	1d. 13½q.
3 Cr. a note	5 dirhams
4 Cr. a note	3 dirhams

1) The Gaon Maṣṭliaḥ, who was the head of the Jews in the Fatimid empire 1127-1139.

2) Ḥalfōn b. Manasse, who was also the court clerk and received payment for the writing of legal documents.

3) Honorary title, borne at that time by the judge Eli b. Nethanel. A judge, when writing out documents, also received a remuneration.

4) The banker did not procure the wheat or the wine, but in the order of payment it was stated for what purpose it was made, as is proved by the orders preserved.

5 Cr. to me	1d.
6 Cr. a note	109½ dirhams
7 Cr. through Musallam	2d.
8-9 Total	96½ ⅓ ⅓ less 1/144
10-11 To his debit	125 ⅓ d.
12 Balance to his debit	28d. ⅓ 2 q. 1/144
13 ((My note on 70 d. He has cashed it))	
14 Credit against this	15q.
16 Cr. two notes for 4 payments	
17 of poll tax	6d. 10q. 2h. and 4 dirhams ¹⁾
18 Cr. a note on	35½ dirhams
19 Cr. paid to me	30 d. yellowish ones ²⁾
20 Cr. for customs duties	10q.
21 ((Cr. note to the Rayyis ³⁾	5 d. Cancelled))
22 Cr. note given to Musallam	10d. exactly
23 Cr. note	7q. less dāniq (1/144d.)
24 Cr.	30 dirhams

All four columns are crossed out by one vertical stroke drawn over each of them. This may denote that all accounts were settled, or that they were transferred to "the big book", the ledger referred to in other accounts similarly crossed out.

Abū Zikrī mostly writes numbers in words, wherefore one number of his sometimes occupies two lines. For the sake of quick information all numbers are rendered here in numerals.

The author expresses his gratitude to the Librarian of the University Library, Cambridge, and the keeper of the Papyrus-sammlung der Universität Heidelberg for the permission to use the manuscripts studied in this article.

1) The dirhams were paid to the officials who collected the poll tax.

2) About the discoloring of the dinars see *Med. Soc.* Vol. I, App. D, sec. 35.

3) The Gaon. See p. 65, n. 1.

A Jewish Business Woman of the Eleventh Century

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A JEWISH BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

By S. D. GOITEIN, Philadelphia and Jerusalem

HUNDREDS OF WOMEN ARE MENTIONED by name in the papers of the Cairo Geniza. Many letters emanating from them, or addressed to them, have been preserved; e.g., a letter from Miriam, the sister of Maimonides, addressed to her illustrious brother.¹ Even more numerous are the documents relating to women: marriage contracts, which in those days were real contracts and not mere formularies; lists of trousseaus, enumerating and specifying the value of a bride's jewelry, clothing, bedding, and household goods; settlements after marital strife or on occasion of a divorce; depositions in court, powers-of-attorney, purchases and sales, gifts and wills, and so forth.

Women were also active in economic life—so much so, indeed, that many marriage contracts contain provisions for the bride's rights to the remuneration received for her work. In the food industry, women were less conspicuous than one would expect; but spinning, weaving, and dyeing were normal pastimes of housewives, and, for many, a means of gaining a livelihood. We repeatedly read about female agents, mostly of the Muslim persuasion, who sold textiles for Jewish merchants, presumably in the harems of the Muslim upper class. One document even tells us about a Jewish woman broker who dealt in Hebrew books. This is not as strange as it appears on first sight. Books often formed part of an estate inherited by women and since we find them selling their own books, it is not surprising to encounter a female broker dealing in this valuable commodity.²

¹ Published in Tarbiz 32 (1963), pp. 184 ff.

² Cf. the present writer's *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World, as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* Chapter II, section 6, and Chapter III, section A 1.

The most colorful woman met with, thus far, in the Geniza papers is one regularly designated as Wuḥsha *al-dallāla*, the broker. She was, like her father, a banker rather than a broker; for most of her assets consisted of loans, for which precious objects were given as security. She was rich, and never married, but had a love affair from which a son was born. All this was very uncommon.

Wuḥsha literally means "one without whom one feels lonely." This was not her name, but an honorific title, or rather a term of endearment. Her full name, as it appears in a court record to be discussed presently, was "Karima ("The Dear One"), daughter of 'Ammār (the Arabic equivalent of Hebrew Amram), known as Wuḥsha, the broker." In a long list of contributors to a public charity she appears together with, or rather immediately before, 'Ammār, the son of the Rosh ha-Qahal, or Head of the Community. Thus it is more than likely that this man was her father.³ His full name was Amram, son of Ezra (spelled by him with a Hē), the *Rosh ha-Qahal*, as he signs his name in a document drawn up in Old Cairo in the year 1093 C.E.⁴ From a fragmentary legal deed we learn that this Amram was a *shulḥānī*, or banker, and that his father had been Head of the Community, not in Old Cairo, but in Alexandria; cf. below.⁵ The only dated document concerning Wuḥsha herself comes from a record book of the rabbinical court in Old Cairo for the year 1097/8, pieced together from many fragments by the present writer in connection with his collection of Geniza papers dealing with the India trade.⁶ This item is dated 15 Iyyar 1409

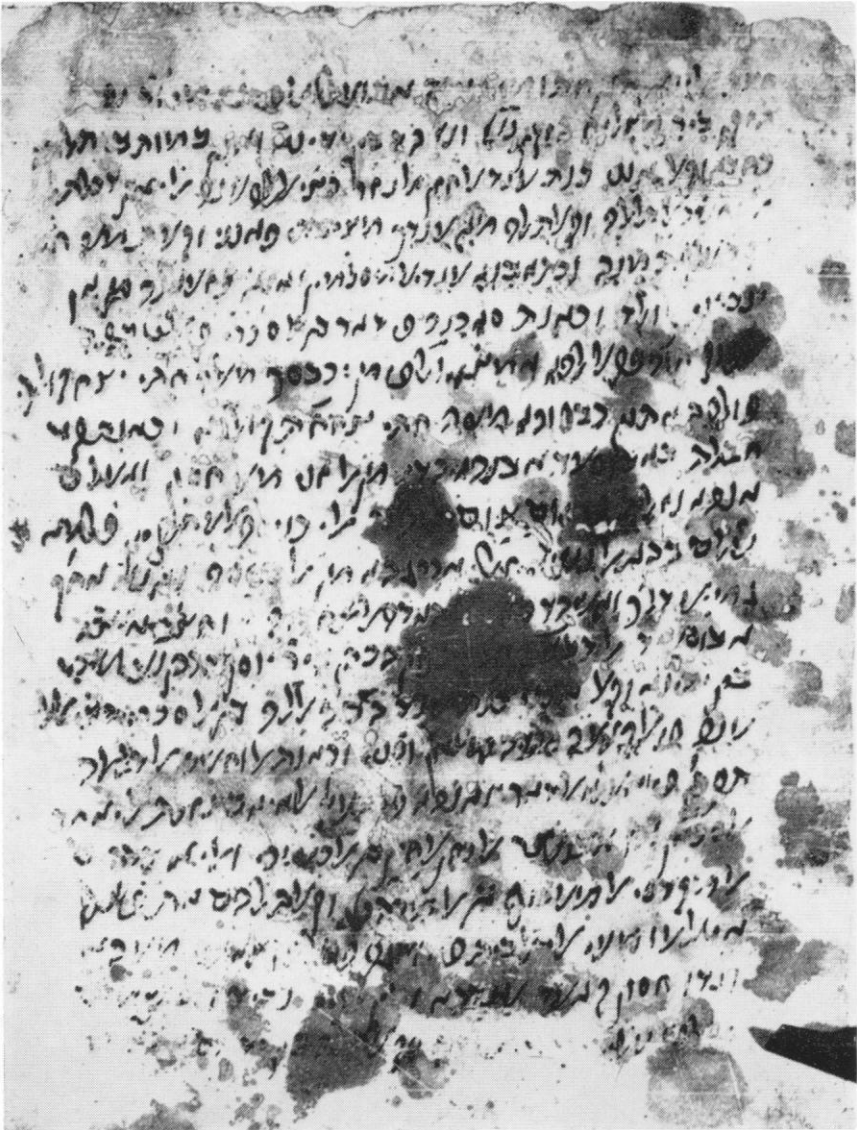
³ TS (Taylor-Schechter Collection) Misc. 8, fol. 102, II, lines 10-11.

⁴ TS 13 J 1, f. 23.

⁵ TS NS J 401. There are nineteen fragments under this shelf mark. When I assembled 426 pieces of documentary character out of many thousands of fragments contained in the New Series of the Taylor-Schechter Collection, I had no time to give numbers to the small fragments contained in NSJ 401 and other such collective items, and, as far as I know, no numbers have been given to them since.

⁶ Cf. the present writer's "Letters and Documents on the India Trade in Medieval Times," *Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad, 27 (1963),

The Testimony about Wuhsha's Love Affair



(of the Era of the Documents), which corresponds to April 19, 1098. The document then continues:

"On the same day, Mr. 'Ulla ha-Levi, son of Joseph, presented Mr. David, son of the late judge ⁷ Ya'ir, to the court, and the latter witnessed for the former that he was in the synagogue on Wednesday, the tenth of this month, when Karima, the daughter of 'Ammār, known as Wuḥsha, the broker, appeared in the synagogue and said to him and to Moses, the *melammēd* (teacher), and to Ma'ālī, ha-Kohen, the brother of the sexton: I want to see the *dayyān* (judge), for I was informed that he summoned me. ⁸ Now, for what reason did he do this to me? One of those present answered her: Because 'Ulla ha-Levi appealed against you to the President of the Court, ⁹ wherefore he sent after you, asking you to appear with him ('Ulla) before the Court, but you refrained from appearing with him in the Court, and thus you deserved a public notification and warning. Said she—and I heard it—: 'What do I owe to Mr. 'Ulla that he should make such a claim against me? All that is due to him from me is five qirāṭs. ¹⁰ For five qirāṭs he makes such a fuss.' At the same time, also Ma'ālī ha-Kohen, the brother of the sexton, was present, and made the same deposition as the aforementioned David.

We have written down what has been said before us, and have signed, so that it may serve as a document conveying rights and as a proof." ¹¹

pp. 188-205, now included in the volume *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden 1966, pp. 329-350.

⁷ The original has *shōfēl*, often, but not always, designating a layman acting as judge (as opposed to *dayyān*, a professional, scholarly judge).

⁸ The text has *akhrāzani*, a Judaeo-Arabic term derived from Heb. *hakhrāzā*, a public warning to a person who had not come to court when summoned.

⁹ The word *bēth dīn* mostly refers to the presiding *dayyān* and not to the court as a whole.

¹⁰ Twenty four *qirāṭs* make one dinar. About the purchasing value of that gold piece see below page 229.

¹¹ Contained in the University Collection of manuscripts of the University Library, Cambridge, England, no. Add. 3420 d.

The record was written and signed by Nissim, the son of the famous Rav (a rare title at that time, given solely to a prominent scholar) Nahray ben Nissim. The two co-signers were Isaac ben Samuel, the Sefaradi, an even more renowned scholar and author, and Abraham ben Shema'ya, "a descendant of the Gaon Shema'ya."

Besides providing us with Wuḥsha's proper name and an exact date, the document, insignificant as it is, has some value. It shows that she was personally known to the three judges and a number of other persons, because otherwise, as was the case with women appearing or referred to in Court, the phrase "after the establishment of her true identity" would have been added. 'Ulla, with whom she had dealings, was one of the most prominent members of the community at that time, and many documents emanating from him or referring to him have been preserved in the Geniza.

The circumstances of Wuḥsha's life can best be reconstructed from her will. The document concerned was not a formal legal instrument, although it is neatly written. It bears no date, and refers to persons and matters in an informal way. Its date can, however, be fixed with a high degree of accuracy, for it is in the handwriting of the "Diadem of the Cantors," the cantor Hillel ben Eli, a confidant of Wuḥsha—as we shall learn subsequently—and one of the most prolific court clerks appearing in the Geniza. He wrote and signed a great number of records between 1066 and 1100, at least twenty during 1097/8 alone. In some letters he is referred to as "the ḥazzān from Bagdad," and his handwriting bears an unmistakable likeness to the style of the Hebrew script cultivated by the chancelleries of the Babylonian Yeshivot. Thus, when he started his career as court clerk in Old Cairo in 1066, or perhaps a few years earlier, he cannot have been then too young. On the other hand, we have, thus far, two documents signed by him in the year 1100, but none after that date. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that he died not very long after 1100, and that the will translated below

was made by Wuḥsha approximately at the turn of the century.

For an idea of the purchase value of the money referred to, the reader should note that two dinars or gold pieces were regarded as a monthly income sufficient for modest middle-class people. The will is found in the Taylor-Schechter Collection (referred to as TS) of the University Library Cambridge, England, and bears the shelf mark TS Arabic 4, fol. 5. Written in Arabic, it contains seventy short lines. For the convenience of the reader we divide the document into nine articles, provided with superscriptions not found, of course, in the original.

Page One

A. Willed to Relatives

- 1 *Main Points of the Will* 2 *of Wuḥsha, the Broker.*
- 3 *To my brother shall be given one hundred dinars*
- 4 *from the objects given to me as security,*
- 5 *as well as a pair of fiver rings¹² and a Dabīqī robe.¹³*
- 6 *To my sister—fifty dinars from the objects given as security,*
- 7 *as well as a mourning dress, a half-mantle,¹⁴ and a head-*
- cover.¹⁵*
- 8 *To the daughter of my paternal uncle—five dinars, a cloak,¹⁶*
- 9 *a half-mantle, a pair of Sempervivum (Houseleek)¹⁷ rings,*
- a . . .*

¹² Text: *ḥīlaq mukhammas*. According to ms. TS 24. 16, line 8, such a pair of rings was worth eight dinars. Most probably, each ring consisted of five parts.

¹³ A fine Egyptian linen.

¹⁴ Text: *niṣf ridā*, very common as part of a bride's outfit.

¹⁵ Text: *khaṣiyy*, also extremely common in the Geniza, but not yet found elsewhere. Perhaps identical with *khaṣiyy*, cf. Wahrmund, Arab.-Deutsch, s. v.

¹⁶ This textile—*malḥafa*—served both as blanket and as a piece of clothing.

¹⁷ These rings most probably were called Sempervivum (Houseleek) because of their similarity to the rosettes of fleshy leaves formed by that common plant. Thus far, not found elsewhere.

- 10 *of silver, a woman's cap, the bed on which I lie, 11 but not the carpets.*
 12 *To my sister Šibāḥ—ten dinars.*

B. Left for Charitable and Religious Purposes

- 13 *For the cemetery*¹⁸*—twenty five dinars.*
 14 *For the synagogues in Old Cairo—twenty dinars.*
 15 *For the synagogues of Dammūh and (New) Cairo five dinars,*
 16 *(Added in smaller script) for the purchase of oil for study.*¹⁹

Page Two

- 1 *To the poor of Old Cairo twenty dinars shall be given.*
 2 *To Joseph's wife five dinars shall be given.*²²
 3 *To each of her two brothers five dinars shall be given.*
 4 *To an orphan girl in (New) Cairo, a relative of mine, two dinars shall be given.*

C. Form of Payment

5 *All this shall be paid from the debts* 6 *against which securities have been given and which are listed in three* 7 *documents written in Arabic letters, the securities, as well* 8 *as the debts. All the aforementioned* 9 *to whom I have willed something shall receive payment from the securities,* 10 *as mentioned before.*

D. Appointment of the Son Born out of Wedlock as Heir

The remaining 11 *securities shall be added to* 12 *the cash in gold which I possess, namely three hundred dinars* 13 *which are ready with me and sixty seven dinars* 14 *deposited with*

¹⁸ Cemetery: *maghāra*, Hebrew *me'ārā*, literally: cave, as the cemetery is still called by the Yemenites. The testator is not paying here for her tomb. The expenses for the latter are included in section F. Here, she donates an exceptionally high sum for the upkeep of the cemetery.

¹⁹ Dammūh was a particularly holy synagogue near Giza on the western bank of the Nile. The money given to the synagogues, as often, was earmarked for their illumination so that studies could be pursued in them during night time.

²⁰ This woman was perhaps the widow of another brother.

Lady Ikhtiyar, ²¹ 15 in addition to all I possess in cash and kind, in rugs 16 and carpets. All this shall be kept for my son on conditions 17 I shall mention, and, if he remains alive and attains maturity,

Page Three

1 shall be handed over to him.

E. Provisions in Case the Boy Dies before
Reaching Maturity

If, however, God forbid, death 2 overtakes him before, one half of all this shall be given to the synagogues 3 in Old Cairo and to the poor in equal halves. 4 The other half shall be divided between my heirs in equal shares, 5 to wit, my brother, my sisters, and the daughters (corrected, it seems, to: daughter) of my paternal uncle. 6 To his (namely, the boy's,) father, Ḥassūn of Ascalon, 7 not one penny shall be given, except that two promissory notes 8 concerning a debt of eighty dinars which he owes me, will be handed over to him 9 in case my son meets his predestined death, in addition to ten 10 dinars out of the estate of the boy. But the rest is 11 for the synagogues and the poor in equal shares, 12 namely one half, and the other half for my family, as I have explained 13 before.

F. Expenses for the Funeral

14 *The following shall be expended on my funeral 15 and on my "shrouds": fifty dinars, to be taken from the cash available. 16 The following shall be bought for me: 17 A Dabīqī ²² garment for six d., a cloak for six d., 18 a Ṭalī ²³ cap for two d., a hood for six d., 19 a Dabīqī kerchief for two d., a veil for two d.,*

²¹ "Choice"—a strange name, but found also in other Geniza documents. Cf. the male name Mukhtār, the chosen one.

²² See above Note 13.

²³ A linen finer than Dabīqī, and more lasting in wear, originally produced in the country between the Caucasus and the Black Sea, cf. R. B. Serjeant, "Islamic Textiles," *Ars Islamica* 10 (1943), p. 103. Common in the lists of trousseaus.

Page Four

1 *a Tustarī* ²⁴ *cover for six to seven dinars, 2 and a coffin. Furthermore, the payment for the pallbearers* ²⁵ *and all other expenses for me 3 until I reach my grave and the tomb 4 will be built. The remainder of the fifty dinars shall be distributed 5 to the cantors who will walk behind my coffin, to each 6 according to his rank and excellence.*

G. Assets and Liabilities

7 *What is owed to me and what I owe to others has been specified by me in the documents 8 written in Arabic letters. Action shall be taken accordingly.*

H. Education of Wuḥsha's Son

9 *The melammēd Rabbī Moses shall be taken to him and shall teach him 10 the Bible and the prayer book to the degree it is appropriate that he should know them. 11 The teacher shall be given a blanket and a sleeping carpet so that he can 12 stay with him. He shall receive from 13 the boy's estate every week five dirhams 14 according to the judgment of the orphans' court and the elders.* ²⁶

I. Final Reference to Declarations Made previously

15 *All that is written in the Arabic documents 16 has been dictated and authorized by me. They were written by the elder 17 Abū Maṣṣūr, the son of Ayyūb (Job)* ²⁷ *and someone else. 18 Action shall be taken in accordance with it.*

²⁴ A brocade called after a famous industrial center in south-west Persia.

²⁵ The cemetery was far away. Therefore, the bearers of the coffin were hired men.

²⁶ The court and the elders are empowered to change the teacher's emoluments from time to time, if the general conditions change. This *melammēd* is most probably identical with the one bearing the same name and appearing in the court record of 1098, cf. p. 227.

²⁷ This man was Jewish. He contributed to the charity referred to in Note 3.

This will is remarkable in more than one respect. The sums expressly referred to amount to a total of 689 dinars. In those days, when money was scarce, this represented a fortune. It is also noteworthy that as much as 300 dinars was kept in cash, and an additional 67 dinars were deposited with another woman. The sums dedicated to charitable and religious purposes were unusually high and certainly intended to atone for Wuḥsha's only too patent sins. It is also interesting to note that the synagogue of the Iraqians, from which Wuḥsha was ignominiously expelled on the Day of Atonement, as we shall read later on, was not discriminated against in her will. This is the more notable since four or five years at most can have lapsed since that event, for the boy born from Wuḥsha's misalliance had not yet begun to learn the prayers, which study would normally begin between the ages of five and six at the latest.

The funeral expenses were exorbitant, about five times as high as a middle-class person normally would allow himself. The socially ostracized Wuḥsha wanted to show off and prove to every one what a great woman she was. She knew, of course, that the provisions of her will would become the talk of the synagogue long before she would be laid to her rest.

The idea of allotting one hundred dinars to her brother but only fifty to her sister was certainly inspired by the Muslim environment, according to whose law a female receives one-half the share of a male in the same degree of relationship to the deceased. The second sister, who is called by name and receives only ten dinars, either had another mother, or had only recently received a substantial gift from the testator, e.g. for her trousseau.

Of particular interest is Wuḥsha's attitude towards the man with whom she had had an affair, the father of her only child. "He shall not get a penny"—these were certainly *ipsissima verba*, her own words. The man was from Ascalon, Palestine. We are here at the very beginning of the Crusaders period. Ascalon, although resisting the onslaught of the Crusaders

until 1153, was constantly in danger, and, as we learn from the Geniza, many of its citizens took refuge in Egypt. As a refugee and perhaps separated from his own family, Ḥassūn, as he is called here and in the following document, took advantage of the rich broker and received from her loans amounting to the very considerable sum of eighty dinars. According to Wuḥsha's will, if the boy remained alive and reached maturity, the debt would have to be repaid, the assumption obviously being that a son would not press his father, if he was in straits. In case the boy died, however, the mother was considerate enough to release Ḥassūn from his obligation, certainly because she knew that he hardly would be able to comply with it.

The last thought of the dying woman was given to the religious education of her little boy. She did not intend to make a scholar of him, but she wanted him to know what was appropriate for a Jewish man. Such a concern of a woman on deathbed is found elsewhere, in the Geniza, even with regard to a little daughter.²⁸ The idea of private tuition with the teacher staying overnight was also nothing exceptional. Study at night-time was highly recommended even for young boys, which is perhaps natural in a hot climate, where people anyhow spend a large proportion of the night talking or telling stories.²⁹ Noteworthy and most disappointing, however, is the small salary assigned to the teacher: five dirhams or silver pieces per week, a remuneration which a master mason would receive for one day's work.³⁰ A dinar had at that time an average value of thirty six dirhams. Thus, the twenty-one or twenty-two dirhams paid to the teacher during a month would amount to only a little over one-quarter of the modest average monthly income of two dinars which we noted above. The idea of the natural in-

²⁸ Cf. the present writer's *Sidrē Ḥinnūkh, Jewish Education in Muslim Countries*, Jerusalem 1962, pp. 66-67.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 127 and 136.

³⁰ Cf. *Mediterranean Society* (see Note 2), Chapter II, section 3.

equality of men was so deeply ingrained in that society that even a rich woman would not dream of securing a better education for her child by paying his teacher a decent salary. God has ordained that a melammed should go hungry. Assigning him more than the usual minimum would have appeared foolish, or perhaps even bad form.

In the same vein, only two dinars were allotted to an orphan relative. An orphan should be pitied. Some alms should be dropped to him. Providing him with opportunities like those that happier people have would, however, have been regarded as a reversal of God's judgment. Thus we see that impressive as Wuḥsha's will may appear to us in some respects, in the main it is a true mirror of the notions of the society in which she lived.

In conclusion, we have to deal with a document dealing specifically with Wuḥsha's love affair. Like the first item discussed in this paper, it originally formed part of a record book, but only the first page of our document has been preserved, which deficiency also entails the loss of the date normally appearing at the end of a court record. Overleaf, there is a short statement about the settlement of a small debt, dated Monday, 8 Shevat 1440 of the Era of the Documents, which corresponds to January 1, 1129. This does not necessarily imply that our document was written in the same year. To be sure, both records are in the handwriting of Ḥalfon ben Manasse, from whose hand we have over a hundred dated documents from the years 1102 through 1138 (and who, incidentally, was a son-in-law of Hillel ben Eli, who wrote Wuḥsha's will).³¹ However, the two pages differ somewhat in layout and even in script. (Ḥalfōn's style changed slightly over the years.) For short statements like the one just referred to, scribes often used the blank reverse side of a discarded document not needed any more. Thus, the court record with which we are concerned here might

³¹ Details in *Mediterranean Society*, Appendix to Chapter VIII, section B 1.

have been written ten or more years before 1129. Other considerations on the approximate date of the document will be discussed after its presentation.

In addition to its incompleteness, the bad state of preservation makes the interpretation of this document very difficult. Much of the writing is effaced and covered with stains. Only the fact that Ḥalfōn's script and style are so well known to us has made it possible to recover practically the whole page with the exception of the last line, in which only a few letters are visible. The document, contained in the Taylor-Schechter Collection, bears the shelf mark TS 10 J 7, fol. 10, verso. It is written in Arabic, interspersed with Hebrew and Aramaic words and phrases, as usual.

1 The elder Abū 'Alā Japheth, the... , 2 the son of the elder Maslī'aḥ—may he rest in Eden—appeared before us and made the following deposition, while we were constituted 3 as a court of three. He said: "I was with the cantor, 'The Diadem' ³²—may God accept him with favor ³³—when 4 Wuḥsha, the broker, came in and said: 'Do you not have an advice for me? I had an affair ³⁴ with Ḥassūn 5 and conceived from him. We contracted a marriage before a Muslim notary, ³⁵ but I am afraid 6 that he may deny being the father of my child.' She then lived in the house of Ben al-Sukkārī ³⁶ 7 on the uppermost floor. He (the cantor) said: 'Go and gather some people, and let them surprise you with him so that your assertion might be confirmed.' 8 She did so, gathering two who surprised her with him, and confirmed her assertion. She was then 9 pregnant with this ³⁷ Abū Sa'd, her son, whom she had conceived in her illicit relation with Ḥassūn. I know also 10 that she went on the

³² Hebrew *Nēzer*. This was the honorific title of Hillel ben Eli.

³³ Ar. *raḍīya Allāhu 'anhu*, a eulogy for the dead normally used in reference to the saints of Islam.

³⁴ Ar. *waqa't ma'a*, which perhaps simply means: "I slept with..."

³⁵ Ar. *wa-kitābunā 'indī ('ind) al-muslimin*.

³⁶ The maker or seller of sugar, a very common Jewish family name.

³⁷ I.e., who forms the object of the case brought before the court.

Fast of Atonement to the synagogue of the Iraqians, but when 11 the Nāsī ³⁸ of blessed memory noticed her, he expelled her from the synagogue. I know 12 all this for sure, and deposit herewith my testimony to this effect. There appeared also in court 13 the ritual slaughterer Abū Saʿīd Ḥalfōn ha-Kohen, son of Rabbi Joseph ha-Kohen—may he rest in Eden—and deposited the following witness in our presence: 14 “I was living in the house of Hibat Allah ³⁹ Ben al-Sukkārī—may God accept him 15 with favor—on the ground floor for many years, while Wuḥsha, the broker, 16 had her domicile in the uppermost part of the house. In those days, she came down once to one 17 of the tenants, namely Abū Naṣr, the ⁴⁰ Kohen, the cantor Ben al-Kāmukhī, ⁴¹ and to Abraham 18 the Jerusalemite, known as the son of the *mrht*, ⁴² and said to them: ‘Please, 19 come up with me to my room for something. The two went up with her 20 and found Ḥassūn sitting in her place and. . . .

The purpose of these witnesses is self-evident. They were intended to establish the fact that Abū Saʿd, Wuḥsha’s son, was the issue of a relationship which was irregular, but not incestuous or otherwise of a nature to disqualify him from marrying a Jewish wife. Abū Saʿd’s status in the community might have been contested at any time. But the desire, and even necessity, to vindicate his legitimacy were particularly urgent when he had come of age and wished to marry. A

³⁸ The synagogue of the Babylonians in Old Cairo was presided over by a Nāsī, or member of the family of the Rōsh ha-Gōlā, or Head of the Diaspora, who resided in Baghdad.

³⁹ “The Gift of God,” the Arabic equivalent of Nethanel.

⁴⁰ Here, the Arabic article is used, because this Kohen, a famous cantor, certainly used to pronounce the priestly blessing, that means, he did not only bear the title Kohen, but functioned as such. In one Geniza document a Kohen is characterized as “the one who pronounces the blessing.”

⁴¹ A common family name. Kāmukh was a certain relish, obviously prepared by the forefathers of these families.

⁴² I take this family name, which occurs repeatedly, as derived from *rahaṭ*, a form of religious poetry, i.e. the founder of the family specialized in the composition of this type of liturgy.

certificate from the Cairo Geniza to the effect that there was no objection to the proposed marriage of a certain couple was published by Professor D. H. Baneth, and more certificates of this type have been found by the present writer.⁴³ If, as we have assumed, Wuḥsha died shortly after 1100, our document would thus belong approximately to the 1120's. This is confirmed by circumstantial evidence. On the one hand, four persons involved—namely Wuḥsha herself, her confidant the cantor Hillel, the Nāsī, who expelled her from the synagogue, and the proprietor of the house in which she lived, were all dead. On the other hand, they are referred to in a way which shows that they had been well known to the three judges to whom the testimony was given. Wuḥsha's action described in this document seems to imply that she was not above suspicion of having had relations with another man as well.

On top of her misbehavior, Wuḥsha contracted a marriage with her lover before a Muslim notary. This was done most probably because Ḥassūn had a wife in his native city of Ascalon who was not prepared to grant him a divorce, in which case the Jewish authorities would not permit him to marry another wife. A contract made before a Muslim notary corresponded to all intents and purposes to a modern civil marriage, and, as we know from other Geniza records, was of course ostracized by the rabbinical courts and liable to lead to excommunication. Wuḥsha must have rescinded the contract later on, for otherwise Ḥassūn would partly have inherited from her. According to Muslim law, no testator is empowered entirely to disinherit statutory heirs.⁴⁴

A last point: Wuḥsha lived in an apartment house, not in a home of her own. For a woman of her financial capacity this was extremely uncommon. We can explain why her father—unlike most Jewish fathers of that time—did not leave her a house or part of a house. (We remember that Wuḥsha had

⁴³ Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume, Hebrew Volume, New York 1950, pp. 75/6 and 84.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Mediterranean Society* (see Note 2), Chapter VI.

two sisters and, at least, one brother). He originated from Alexandria, and might have lived only a short time in Old Cairo. But if Wuḥsha had ever married, it would have been strange that she should not have acquired a home, for even brides from families with modest means usually brought into marriage a house or a part of it. Thus, it is rather safe to assume that Wuḥsha never married. Why a rich girl who was able to bear a child should not have married is hard to explain. Could her successful business have made her too independent?

In a number of Geniza documents from the first half of the twelfth century there are references to relatives of a woman called Wuḥsha. Since, however, in none of these cases is she referred to as the broker, while in two of them the person mentioned cannot be identical with the business woman forming the subject of this paper, for the time being those documents should not be taken as an indication of the particular popularity of our Wuḥsha.

Wuḥsha's Will Translated above, p. 229 ff. TS Arabic 4, fol. 5.

- | | |
|--|----|
| עיון מא וצתה בה | 1 |
| אלוחשה אלדלאלה | 2 |
| ידפע לאכיהא מאיה דינ' | 3 |
| מן ערוץ אלרהון | 4 |
| והוג חלק מכמס ומלאה דביקי | 5 |
| ולאכתי כמסין דינ' מן ערוץ אלרהון | 6 |
| ותוב חדאד ונצף רדא וכצי | 7 |
| ולאבנה עמי כמסה דנא' ומלחפה | 8 |
| ונצף רדא והוג חלק חי אלעאלם ו | 9 |
| פצה ומערקה ואלדי תחתי ותובי מא | 10 |
| כלא אלבסט | 11 |
| ולאכתי צבאה עשרה דנא' | 12 |
| וללמגארה כמסה ועשרין דינ' | 13 |
| וללכנאיס במצר עשרין דינ' | 14 |
| ולכניסה דמוה ולכניסה אלקאהרה כמסה דנא' | 15 |
| 16 (באותיות קטנות יותר) : ישתרי להם בהא וית ויקרי פיהא | |

עמוד ב'

- 1 וידפע ללענזיים עשרין דינ' במצר
- 2 וידפע לזוגה יוסף כמסה דנא'
- 3 וידפע לאכויהא כל ואחד מנהם כמסה דנ'
- 4 וידפע ליתימה באלקאהרה דינארין נסיבה לי
- 5 גמיע דלך כלה יכרג מן גמלה מא
- 6 עלי אלרהון אלתי הי מתבותה פי אלג'
- 7 אוראק אלערבי בשרח אלרהון ומא לי
- 8 עליהם יאכד כל מן אוצית לה בשי
- 9 מן אלמקדם דכרהם ערוץ אלרהון
- 10 חסב מא דכרתה ומא פצל ען
- 11 דלך מן בקאיה אלרהון ינצאף אלי
- 12 אלעין אלדי לי והו תלתה מאיה דינ'
- 13 הי חאצרה מעי ואלו סבעה וסתין דינ'
- 14 איצא ודיעה לי ענד סת אכתיאר מע
- 15 גמיע מא יבקא לי מן עין וערץ ופרש
- 16 ובסט יחתפט בה לולדי בשריטה
- 17 אנא אדכרהא אן עאש ובלג אשדה

עמוד ג'

- 1 יתסלם דלך ואן ואלעיאד באללה לחקה
 - 2 אגלה קבל דלך כאן נצף דלך ללכנאס
 - 3 במצר וללענזיים נצפין באלסויה
 - 4 ואלנצף אלאכר יקסם עלי וראתי באלסויה
 - 5 והם אכי וכואתי ובנאת (מתוקן : ובנ) עמי
 - 6 ולא ידפע לאביה חסון אלעסקלאני
 - 7 מן דלך חבה ואחדה מא כלא ותיקתין
 - 8 לי ענדה בתמאנין דינ' אן לחק ולדי
 - 9 אגלה אלמחתום תדפע לה מע עשרה
 - 10 דנא' מן גמלה מא יכלפה אלצבי ואלבאקי
 - 11 ללכנאס וללענזיים נצפין באלסויה אלנצף
 - 12 מנה ואלנצף אלאכר לאהלי עלי מא שרחת
 - 13 איצא
 - 14 אלדי יכרג פי חואיגי
 - 15 וכפני כמסין דינ' / מן אלעין אלנאץ ו
 - 16 ישתרא לי מן דלך
- / נוסף מן הצד

- 17 תוב בסתה דנא' ומלאה בסתה דנא' דביקי
 18 ומערקה טלי בדינארין ומעגר בסתה דנא'
 19 מגדיל דביקי בדינארין ונקאב בדינארין

עמוד ד'

- 1 וכסא תסתרי בסתה דנא' אלי סבעה
 2 ותאבות וחואיג חמאלין ונואיבי
 3 גמיעהא אלי אן אצל אלי חפרתי ויבנא
 4 קברי ומא פצל מן אלכמסין דיג' יפרק
 5 עלי אלחזאנין אלדי יכרגו וראיי כל מנהם
 6 חסב מוצעה וגלאלתה :
 7 אלדי לי ועלי קד אתבתתה פי אלאוראק
 8 אלערבי יפעל במקתצאהא
 9 אלמלמד ר' משה ויקראה
 10 אלמקרא ואלצלאלה מא יצלח אן יעלמה
 11 יוכד לה גטא ווטא ידפע ללמעלם ליכון
 12 מקים ענדה וידפע לה מן גמלה
 13 מא לה פי כל אסבוע ה דראהם
 14 חסב מא ירי בית דין ואלשיוך
 15 אלמכתוב פי אלאוראק אלערבי גמיעה
 16 אמלאיי מאדון מכתוב בכט אלשיך
 17 אבי מנצור בן איוב ובכט גירה
 18 יעול עלי אקתצאה

Testimony that Ḥassūn of Ascalon was the father of the illegitimate son of Wuḥsha the Broker

Translated above, p. 236 ff, v. TS 10 J 7, fol. 10,

- 1 חצר אלינא אנן חתומי מטה אבו עלא אלפרנס (?) מרור יפת
 2 הזקן ביר מצליח הזקן נע ושהד בין ידינא ואנן במותב תלתה
 3 כחדא וקאל אנני כנת ענד אלחזן אלנור רצי אללה ענה אלי אן דכלת
 אליה
 4 אלחשהא אלהלאלה וקאלת לה מא ענדך מצירתי (?) פאנני וקעת מע חסון
 5 וקד עלקת מנה וכתאבנא ענדי [ענד] אלמסלמין ואנא פועאנה מן אן
 6 יוכרני אלולד וכאנת סאכנה פי דאר בן אלסכרי פי אלטבקה
 7 אלפוקאניה פקאל להא אמצי ולפי מן יכבסך מעה חתי יצח קולך
 8 פולפת אתנין כבסוהא מעה חתי צחחת קולהא וכאנת קד

- 9 חבלת באבו סעד אבנהא הדא מן אלזני מע חסון ואעלם
 10 אנהא גולת פי יום צום כפור אלי כניסה אלעראקין פלמא
 11 עלם בהא אלנשיא זל אכרגהא מן אלכניסה ואנא אחק
 12 גמיע דלך ואשהד בהאדה אלשהאדה אלצחיחה וחצר איצא
 13 אבו סעיד אלדבאח (מרור) חלפון הכהן ביר יוסף הכהן נע ושהד
 14 בין ידינא וקאל אנני כנת ענד הבה אללה בן אלסכרי רצי אללה
 15 ענה פי אלקאעה מדה זמאן וסגין וכאנת אלוחשה אלדלאלה
 16 תסכן פי אעלא אלדאר ואנהא פי הולאי אלאיאם גולת אלי אחד
 17 אלסכאן והו אבו נצר אל כהן אלחזאן בן אלכאמכי ואלי אברהים
 18 אלמקדסי אלמערופ בן אלמרהט וקאלת להם אתפצלו
 19 אטלעו מעי אלי אלבית פי חאנה פטלעו אלאתנין מעהא
 20 וגדו חסון קאעד ענדהא ואן נביד ומשמום

The Papyrussammlung Erzherzog Rainer in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, no. H 31, contains a large fragment of a document in which Wuḥsha, the Broker makes a gift to a woman called Sitt al-Ḥusn ("Beauty") and also releases her from any obligation resulting from previous business connections between the two. Wuḥsha's son, Abū Sa'd, is also referred to. Unfortunately, only the legal verbiage, as well as the names of the witnesses and judges, but not the details of the gift and the release have been preserved.



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FORMAL FRIENDSHIP IN THE MEDIEVAL NEAR EAST

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(Read April 23, 1971)

FRIENDSHIP as a social institution and spiritual bond, and not merely as a more or less passing human relationship, was known to various civilizations. From the Bible we might remember that King David had an official companion styled "friend of the king," and so did his son King Solomon.¹ Their eldest sons, the crown princes, too, had their official friends whom they consulted in difficult hours.² The friendship between David and Jonathan, the son of King Saul, is to be understood against this background. Jonathan, the crown prince, chose David as his permanent companion, because, as the Bible says, he loved him as his own self,³ an expression echoed in the writings of the Greeks, and later the Arabs. Jonathan, the Bible tells us, stripped himself of his robe, his armor, his belt, and his sword, and put all this on David. Jonathan's attire represented his personality. By donning it, David became Jonathan, the two fused into one. This formal act of the conclusion of a friendship had a name. It was designated by the term "covenant," *berit*, the same word that the Bible uses for the bond between husband and wife.⁴

Besides this formally concluded friendship between two individuals the Bible knows of groups bound together by ecstasy and prophetic rapture induced by music. We read about them in the stories of Samuel and Saul. The procedure of initiation into the group was the opposite of what we have just met with in personal friendship. The novice was expected to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the group, to be seized by the spirit, until he forgot himself and threw off all his

clothing, piece after piece, and stood naked among the prophesiers day and night; in other words, he divested himself of his individuality, he became one with the group and was possessed by the spirit.⁵

Within the group there was room for formal *personal* friendship, namely between master and disciple, between the leader of the group and his prospective successor. The First Book of Kings tells us that the future prophet Elisha originally was a farmer, himself ploughing his fields and supervising the work of his farmhands when the prophet Elijah, as was his habit, appeared suddenly and cast his mantle upon him, meaning, as in the case of David and Jonathan, that the two had become one.⁶ A similar act was performed in the Biblical wedding: the bridegroom spread his robe, or rather the skirt of his robe, over his future life-companion, symbolizing what is written in the Book of Genesis: "They become one flesh."⁷

I have presented the Biblical material on formal friendship in some detail because, as we recognize today more and more, it is illustrative of the ancient Near East in general. The medieval Near East, the one dominated by Islam, was an extremely complex and diversified civilization inasmuch as it absorbed the traditions not only of the ancient Near East, but those of the Greeks and, of course, the pre-Islamic Arabian nomads as well. The social history of this civilization, formerly somewhat neglected, has aroused much interest during the last two decades. Formal friendship, by which I mean a fixed, lasting, and strongly emotional relationship cutting through the bonds of family, clan, or tribe, and mostly called *ṣuḥba* in Arabic, was a typical phenomenon of this Near Eastern medieval civilization, tinged by Islam.

In this paper I shall try to study this institution as it was practiced among the common people. For such an undertaking we have an excellent source in the documents of the so-called Cairo

¹ David's friend: 1 Chronicles 27: 33, in a list of officials and dignitaries. In 2 Samuel 15: 37, and 16: 16-17, conceived as a friend owing special allegiance. Solomon's friend: 1 Kings 4: 5. This "friend" was a son of the prophet Nathan to whom Solomon owed his throne.

² Amnon, the firstborn of David: 2 Samuel 13: 3. Rehoboam, son of Solomon: 1 Kings 12:8. His friends became his servants who "stood before him."

³ 1 Samuel 18: 3 See *ibid.* 18: 1-4.

⁴ Malachi 2: 14.

⁵ 1 Samuel 10: 5-6, and 19: 20-24.

⁶ 1 Kings 19: 19-21.

⁷ Genesis 2: 24. See Ruth 3: 9.

Geniza,⁸ a treasure trove of manuscripts written mostly during the tenth through the thirteenth centuries and found originally in Old Cairo. At that time Old Cairo was the hub of the Islamic world. The Mediterranean and the India trades converged there.⁹ Therefore, the Geniza contains information about major sections of the medieval Near East. The writers and recipients of these letters and documents were mostly, albeit not exclusively, Jewish. But most of the material is written in the Arabic language, and, as the terms used prove, the social notions expressed in it, were, as a rule, not specific to any particular group, but belonged to the general environment of the writers concerned.

The unique value of this material for the historian consists, of course, in its documentary character; it represents life, unlike books, where the personality of the author, his knowledge, aims, and capacities come between reality and the reader.

Before trying, however, to discuss what the Geniza tells us about formal friendship, I must survey, if only in the very barest outline, what Arabic literature has to teach us about the subject, so that the Geniza material may be seen in its proper perspective.

Friendship was of little import in the heroic age of the Arabs, in pre-Islamic Arabia. Pre-Islamic poetry contains some noble verses on friendship,¹⁰ but we would look in it in vain for

a pair like Achilles and Patroclus, on whose brotherly love the whole story of the Trojan war was geared.

We learn about the social institution of the boon companions, *nadīm*, mostly two, who shared the revelries of a poet or hero and served also as his lookouts and guards on his amorous nightly adventures.¹¹ These two boon companions are mentioned, however, most prominently in stories about the Arab kings of Hira, who were under Persian domination.¹² Thus it is likely that the *nadīm*, together with the wine and the singing girls, came to the Arabs from Persia, where, as we shall presently see, the ancient Near Eastern institution of the friends of the kings had remained fully alive.

The negligible role of friendship in pre-Islamic Arabia is to be explained by the preeminence of the bonds of blood and kinship. Or, as the Arab poet has explained it:

Take for your friend whom you will in the days of peace. But know that when fighting comes your kinsman alone is near.¹³

Formal friendship, *ṣuḥba*, came into the Arab world with religion, with the Islam of Muhammad. Conversion was conceived as a personal bond between the new believer and the founder of the religion. It was symbolized by a handclasp, the joining of hands by which the ancient Arabs used to confirm a contract or a covenant. Muhammad's adherents were called his friends or com-

⁸ Pronounced *ghenecza*. About the Cairo Geniza as a source for social history see S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967) 1: pp. 1-28, 395-400.

⁹ For the Mediterranean trade see *A Mediterranean Society* 1: pp. 148-352, 437-490. A collection of three hundred and forty documents from the Cairo Geniza related to the India trade is being prepared for publication. A preliminary report in S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 329-360.

¹⁰ I found this pair of verses rather impressive:

"Make friends with noble men,
If you can find a way to their friendship.
And drink out of their cup,
Even if it is poison right down to the dregs."

T. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Poesie der alten Araber* (Hanover, 1864), p. 79, calls this "ein herrliches Verspaar." The poet happened to be Jewish, but there was no substantial difference between Jewish and pagan pre-Islamic poets. The term for concluding a friendship, used here twice, is *ikhā'*, literally, "taking as brother," see note 14, below.

¹¹ The institution of the boon companions was so well established that many a poem would open with an address in the dual number to two anonymous persons. The most famous case is, of course, the Mu'allāqa, or prize poem, of Imru'u l-Qays, the father of pre-Islamic poetry, whose introductory phrase *qifā nabki*, "you two, stand still, let us cry," has become a catchword for classical, outmoded poetry to the young Arab today.

¹² The first such pair were the two companions of Jadhīma, a vassal of Ardashīr, the founder of the Sasanid dynasty, see R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1956 [reprint]), pp. 34-35. The interesting point in this story is that Jadhīma originally had been too proud to admit anyone to his drinking bouts except two stars, which implies, of course, that the two boon companions had been a long-established institution. The most illustrious (and notorious) king of Hira, Mundhir III (sixth century), ordered his two boon companions to be buried alive. The ceremonies performed at their tombstones gave rise to a famous story of a pair of pre-Islamic heroes, see R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History*, pp. 43-44.

¹³ *Hamāsa of Abū Tammām*, ed. G. Freytag (Bonn, 1828 ff.), p. 327. See also R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History*, p. 84.

panions, *aṣḥāb*, or, in relationship to each other, brothers, *ikhwān*.¹⁴

From that time on, spiritual bonds of the greatest variety became the base of sustained personal relationships transcending family attachments, the strongest being those connected with Islamic mysticism known as Sufism. According to the developed theory of Sufism only a specific and lasting relationship with one single master can initiate a novice properly into the Path of Truth. It cannot be learned from books, nor by changing from one master to another.¹⁵ The most sublime stage of this relationship is the self-effacement of the disciple in his master, as when Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, the greatest mystical poet writing in the Persian language, concluded his poems not with his own pen name, but with that of his master.¹⁶ The two symbolic acts of initiation practiced by the ancient prophets of Israel, namely, the clothing of the novice with the mantle of the master and, conversely, the throwing away of all clothing in the ecstasy induced by music, were most prominent features of Sufi life, but there is no historical connection between these *ancient* Near Eastern and *medieval* Near Eastern practices.

The matter was different with regard to another type of formal friendship, the friends of the kings. The Persian dynasty of the Sasanids continued this ancient institution, similarly to what the Hellenistic rulers and Roman emperors had done before. The Muslim ideas about kingship were largely molded by the Sasanid heritage, wherefore the problem of the friends of the kings is copiously ventilated in Islamic literature.¹⁷ In a most remarkable mem-

orandum submitted to Manṣūr, the second Abbasid caliph (754-775), called "Book of Companionship," a Persian nobleman, Ibn al-Muqaffa', surveys the types of persons who should become a caliph's intimates. I have discussed this memorandum in my book *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* under the title "A Turning-point in the History of the Muslim State." "Turning-point," because it was not the aristocrats recommended by Ibn al-Muqaffa', but the technocrats so much more needed by the Muslim state of those days who finally became the caliph's confidants.¹⁸

A third source for thought on friendship in Islam was Greek philosophy and rhetorics which reached the Arabs in many different ways. The most detailed exposition of the topic is found in Miskawayh's book named "Training of the Character," the classical and most influential treatise on Islamic ethics. Man is by nature a social being. Consequently, his intrinsic and highest destination, spiritual perfection, can be reached only through association with a congenial friend.¹⁹

It is a law of sociology that notions alive in the upper classes filter down in the course of time and through adequate transformation to the broader masses of the population. As the writings of the Cairo Geniza show, it was not different with the idea of *ṣuḥba*. Terms coined for the description of this relationship by religion, statecraft, or philosophy, became part and parcel of the daily speech of the common people. *Ṣuḥba* itself became a most important institution; it was indeed the organizational backbone of international trade.

¹⁴ "The true-believers are brothers," Koran 49: 10. Also 9: 12. In order to emphasize that the new brotherhood of religion cut through the bonds of tribal allegiance, the prophet Muhammad concluded formal brotherhood between each Muslim member of his own tribe and one of the Muslims of Medina, to where he emigrated. This was called *ikhā'*, see n. 10, above, and n. 22, below.

¹⁵ An idea to be found in many works on Sufism, especially in the concluding chapter of al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, which is superscribed: "Instruction for the Novice."

¹⁶ See now the important article "Djalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī" by H. Ritter and A. Bausani in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (second edition, Leiden, 1965) 2: pp. 393-397. This self-effacement of the great poet in his master, an almost obscure man, is the more remarkable as recent discoveries have proved how deeply Jalāl ad-Dīn was indebted to his own father, an outstanding author. See A. J. Arberry, "Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," *Islamic Studies* 1 (Karachi, 1962): pp. 89-105.

¹⁷ Our knowledge of Sasanian history is derived to a very large extent from Islamic sources. This fact makes

research in the Iranian influence on Islam extremely complicated, or, as G. E. von Grunebaum has put it: "In some ways, the Persian components of Islamic civilization are more difficult to separate out than the Hellenic precisely because they are more fully integrated and have become effective on so many levels." *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, 1970) 2: p. 501.

¹⁸ S. D. Goitein, *Studies* (see n. 9), pp. 149-167. See "Ibn al-Muqaffa'" in *Enc. of Islam*² (1968) 3: pp. 883-885, by F. Gabrieli.

¹⁹ *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, ed. C. K. Zurayk (Beirut 1967), who provided also an English translation (Beirut, 1968). French translation by Mohammed Arkoun, *Miskawayh, Traité d'Éthique* (Damascus, 1969). See also: M. Arkoun, *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au iv^e/xe siècle: Miskawayh, philosophe et historien* (Paris, 1970). A contemporary of Miskawayh, at-Tawhīdī, wrote a treatise on friendship, which is deeply influenced by Greek thinking. An excellent study of it is found in Marc Bergé, "Une Anthologie sur l'amitié d'Abū Ḥayyān at-Tawhīdī," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 16 (Institut Français de Damas, Damascus, 1961), pp. 15-58.

Let me explain. Because of the enormous risks involved, people normally partook in many different business ventures simultaneously. Above and beyond these, however, any respectable trader had a *ṣāḥib*, or friend, on the other side of the sea who acted for him not merely as legal and business representative, but as his confidant in every respect. The list of services to be rendered by a *ṣāḥib* was interminable. I have drawn up such a list, a rather longish one, in my book *A Mediterranean Society*, Volume I, but it could still be expanded. The *ṣuḥba* was formally concluded and formally dissolved, and the words used in the correspondence were terms of friendship rather than of business. Often the *ṣuḥba* was based on a relationship of master and disciple, that is, a fledgling overseas trader left his home town, worked for some years under the guidance of an established merchant overseas, and, in gratitude for this education, as it was called, became his *ṣāḥib* after his return to his native city. In the India trade, every consignment sent to a *ṣāḥib* was accompanied by presents, as appropriate between friends. Since this custom was not practiced in the Mediterranean trade, it must have been learned by the Muslims and Jews from the Indians.²⁰

A particular type of commercial friendship was the institution of the travel companion, *rafīq*, mentioned in numerous documents and letters, but not yet sufficiently investigated with regard to its origins and history. People endeavored to travel in groups, large or small, but each individual traveler was specifically connected with another one by far-reaching bonds of mutual responsibility. Each was supposed to know the sums of money and description of goods carried by the other, to look after him in the frequent cases of illness or other mishaps, and to take care of his possessions after his death. The thirteenth-century Spanish Muslim writer Ibn Saʿid takes it for granted that a traveler would be imprisoned, beaten, and tortured when his *rafīq* died, because the local authorities would assume that the latter had left money with him.²¹ A Yemenite Jew, writing from Jerusalem

at the beginning of the same century, reports indeed that the government had confiscated all the belongings of his dead travel companion and that he was in great fear because of this.²² I have not found in the Geniza a contract on travel companionship and do not expect to find one, for it was a relationship of personal confidence comparable to the *ṣuḥba*, not a legal obligation—despite the disastrous legal consequences it could sometimes have for a surviving *rafīq*.

In order to illustrate the intimate character of the commercial *ṣuḥba*, I reproduce here a passage from a letter written around 1020 in Qayrawān, then the capital of the country known today as Tunisia, by a merchant and communal leader to his correspondent in Cairo who had broken with him:

I am writing to you my elder—may God protect you from what one fears and grant you what makes one happy—at the end of the month of Av [July/August when the last ships of the season sailed for Egypt.] I am sound in body, but sore in mind because of the absence of your letters, and because you neglect me and turn your mind from my affairs. All the caravans of the land and the ships of the sea have arrived, but I have not seen any letter or commission for me. Even more so: in the letters received from you by our friend So-and-so—may God keep him—no mention is made of me.

Now, my lord, you know well that it is a gift of God to be favored with affection and to be close to the hearts of friends, as it is said [Genesis 39: 3–4]: “The Lord caused all that Joseph did to prosper in his hands; so Joseph found favor in his master’s sight.” If this heavenly favor is withheld from a man, he is forgotten by his friends, and consideration for him becomes slender. When things come to this, a believing man should not make accusations of being neglected and slighted, but thank God, as we must, for both happiness and distress. In short, God is to be praised for everything. I have made it incumbent upon myself not to trouble you by asking you to write to me or to do any business for me, as I feel that this might be a burden for you. Thus, let us wait patiently for a turn of fortune, when our friends will again be the same as they used to be, if God will.²³

This letter, like most of the Geniza letters, is written in Arabic language and Hebrew characters. Another letter of renunciation, written in

²⁰ Details in *A Mediterranean Society* (see n. 9) 1: pp. 164–169. The relationship is described there as “Friendship” or “Informal cooperation” in order to differentiate it from the various forms of partnerships and commendas, which were concluded through legal documents issued by a court or a notary.

²¹ *A Mediterranean Society* 1: pp. 347 and 489, nn. 9–13, where further details about the institution of the *rafīq*.

²² University Library Cambridge (England), Taylor-Schechter Collection 13 J 21, f. 5, 11. 15–18, edited by S. D. Goitein in *Harel* (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 146. This Arabian Jew does not use the term *rafīq*, but writes *kunt muʾakkhī*, “I concluded a brotherhood,” see n. 14, above.

²³ Taylor-Schechter 12.175, ed. S. D. Goitein, *Tarbis* 34 (Jerusalem, 1965): pp. 169–174. Joseph b. Berechiah, Qayrawān, writes to Joseph Ibn ʿAwkal in Cairo.

most beautiful Arabic characters, contains far stronger wording. The writer had for some time considered giving up the friendship—similar allegations are made in other letters of renunciation—but the latest misdeeds committed against the writer by the recipient and his son had made the measure full. After all this, one is astonished to read on the reverse side: "Carry this letter to my intimate friend, the friend of my soul." No name is on the address, which was regarded in those days as an indication of greatest intimacy.²⁴

The letters just referred to originated in the eleventh century. A formal contract of friendship between scholars is known to me only from a far later period. It was written in Cairo on January 2, 1564. The two partners conclude the pact for their own lifetime and that of their children and children's children; they will pray in the same synagogue (which means that they will meet at least twice a day all their lives); and, perhaps most important for them, they will lend each other any book they might possess for a duration of twenty days for the purpose of study or copying and will never conceal from each other any book they have.²⁵

Similar contracts from the thirteenth century are referred to in Hebrew literature from Germany²⁶ and Spain.²⁷ Therefore, I assume that we have

²⁴ Taylor-Schechter Arabic Box 41, f. 53. This letter and the one referred to in n. 23 are translated in full in the present writer's *Mediterranean People: Letters and Documents from the Cairo Geniza Translated into English* 2 (in preparation for the press).

²⁵ MS Firkovitch II 236, f. 5, ed. Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Cincinnati, 1931) 1: pp. 472-474.

²⁶ J. Mann, *loc. cit.*, pp. 453-454, quotes the ethical will of Judah b. Asher b. Yehiel (born and bred in Germany, thirteenth century, emigrated to Spain), who reports that his grandfather was bound to a friend by a covenant which comprised also partnership in the religious merits accruing from a pious life. When, as was the custom, Yehiel's coffin was opened before being lowered into the grave, his friend reminded him to make sure of their common share in Paradise, whereupon a look of joy lit the dead man's face. That will is available in an English translation in Israel Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia, 1926) 2: p. 187.

²⁷ Dr. Meir Benayahu, author of *Azulay* (Jerusalem, 1959, where, 1: pp. 16-17, the later contracts of brotherhood are discussed) drew my attention to a pact of friendship made in Cordova, Spain, in 1317, where Jacob b. Hananel (Siquilli) and Hezekiah undertake to emigrate jointly to the Holy Land. On this pact see Alfred Freimann, "Ascher ben Jechiel," *Jahrbuch der Juedisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 12 (Frankfurt, 1918): p. 281 (reprint, p. 45). The text of this highly interesting pact

here a general medieval phenomenon common to the Christian and Muslim worlds. I shall be grateful for relevant non-Jewish references.

I conclude with the strangest item about friendship found thus far in the Geniza, a book of divination, written in the unmistakable hand of a prominent lawyer and court clerk who was active between 1066 and 1108. He claims possession of secret methods for guiding those seeking his advice and not being in need of horoscopes and astrological computations. Here are answers to three queries about friendship found in different parts of the booklet.

1. You have asked me which of the two of you loves his friend, *ṣāhib*, more. I see that you love him more. May the Creator make the two of you love each other permanently and may not let anyone take pleasure in your failure.

2. Know that love is from God and he has granted you the love of your friend. Everything comes from God. Therefore praise and thank him that he has made you beloved by him and by everyone.

3. You have asked me which of the two of you loves his friend more. I see that the love of the two of you is even. May the Creator make your love permanent and not separate you in eternity.²⁸

The reader may have wondered where homosexuality comes into all this. No doubt it must be taken into consideration. The Arabs were studious disciples of the Greeks and Persians in this matter and perhaps did not need teachers. This brand of friendship, too, had its formal aspects. A poet would mention the male object of his love by name in his poems.²⁹ A powerful ruler would have a favorite whose specific role was known to everyone. The Bible puts the death penalty on any form of homosexuality. But it was only natural that the environment was not

is now easily accessible in B. Dinur, *Israel in the Diaspora* 2, bk. I (Tel-Aviv, 1965): pp. 532-533.

²⁸ Taylor-Schechter Arabic Box 44, f. 54. A small booklet in the hand of Hillel b. Eli, about whom *A Mediterranean Society* (1971) 2: p. 231, and *passim*. The passages translated are found on fol. 3a, no. 4; fol. 5a, no. 5; fol. 8a, no. 5.

²⁹ An outstanding example: Ibn Sahl al-Isrā'īlī al-Andalusī of Sevilla, a convert to Islam and famous poet, whose *diwān*, or collection of poems, has often been printed. He mentions his young friend Mūsā (Moses) again and again in his poems, using the whole gamut of the Koranic stories about the Biblical Moses in order to illustrate the vicissitudes of his love. See *Diwān Ibn Sahl al-Andalusī*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1967), introduction, pp. 46-47.

without influence on the Jews of the medieval Near East, as again is proved by the Geniza.

As far as literary sources are concerned, the subject was treated extensively by J. Schirman, "The Ephebe in Medieval Hebrew Poetry," *Sefarad* 15 (1955): pp. 55-68. Schirman quotes Jewish authors of the Karaite persuasion, writing in the ninth and tenth centuries, who deplore the pernicious influence of the Muslim higher classes, indulging in this vice, on their Jewish neighbors. He also points out that the admiration of the beautiful male youth, so common a topic in Hebrew poetry in Islamic countries during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, disappears entirely in the Spanish, Provençal, and Italian Hebrew poetry, written in a Christian environment in the subsequent period.³⁰

The Cairo Geniza has preserved a detailed statute regulating the pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Dammūh, southwest of Cairo.³¹ Among a great many other prohibitions the statute forbids that young men or a mature man with a boy should separate from the crowd, lest they should get a bad reputation and become suspect; of what, is obvious.³² Even more outspoken is a letter written on the occasion of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in September, 1052. Pilgrims from Tiberias, Palestine, and Tyre, Lebanon, had assembled for the service on the fast of the Day of Atonement, the highest Jewish holiday, when a man from Tiberias

openly made overtures to one from Tyre. The amorous scene led to a fist-fight between the two groups of pilgrims and the police had to be called in. The rather childish writer goes on to describe the subsequent pilgrimage and concludes: "Never did we have more beautiful holidays."³³

The two cases reported indicate that homosexuality was not entirely absent from Jewish Near Eastern society during the High Middle Ages, but was regarded as a despicable vice rather than a deadly crime. In view of the enormous amount of private and public correspondence and of legal material preserved in the Geniza the rarity of the references to this evil proves that it did not form the object of great social concern, while formal friendship, as we have seen, did.

In conclusion, I wish to venture a generalization. While in the Christian West the adoration of female perfection led to the cult of Mary, the mother of the Saviour, in the Muslim East "the contemplation of the unbearded"³⁴ and the attachment to the master were sublimated into self-effacement in the image of God. The "I-Thou" relationship of the official religions was replaced by the ecstasy of identification, of loving God as being one's own self:

Oh ye who are seeking God, seeking God,

Why do ye seek what ye have not lost?

There is no need for seeking. Ye are He ye are He.

Nothing exists besides ye. But where are ye?
Where are ye?"³⁵

³⁰ Schirman's findings were questioned by N. Allony, "The Zevi (-Nasib) in the Hebrew Poetry of Spain," *Sefarad* 23 (1963): pp. 311-321. Allony points out that the passages discussed were either purely literary exercises, or referred to God, or were meant to be taken humorously or cynically (whatever that may mean). While it might be conceded that some of Schirman's interpretations are open to comment, the main result of his study can hardly be questioned.

³¹ About this "Synagogue of Moses" on the site of ancient Memphis see Norman Golb, "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 (1965): pp. 255-259.

³² Taylor-Schechter 20.117 verso, edited by S. Assaf, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1946), pp. 160-162.

³³ Taylor-Schechter 8 J 22, f. 25, partly edited in J. Braslawsky, *Studies in our Country* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), pp. 120-121, who was, however, unable to read the relevant passage. See *A Mediterranean Society* 2: pp. 168 and 555, n. 54.

³⁴ This Arabic phrase (*an-naẓar ila 'l-murd*) is the technical term for the inducement of mystical rapture by friendship with a beautiful youth. The majority of the Sufi masters strongly disapproved of this dangerous avenue to religious ecstasy, e.g., al-Qushayrī, *loc. cit.* (see n. 15, above).

³⁵ Verses by Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, ed. R. A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Divānī Shamsi Tabriz* (Cambridge, 1898): p. 251.



BRILL

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THE CAIRO GENIZA

AS A SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF MUSLIM CIVILISATION

Geniza, as is well known, denotes the lumber-room of a synagogue or any other place in which papers covered with Hebrew letters were buried. For according to Jewish belief, which has its parallels in Muslim and Coptic customs, no paper on which the name of God may be found should be destroyed. So far, only the Genizas of a synagogue in Fuṣṭāṭ (Old-Cairo) and of the nearby cemetery of al-Basāṭīn have been found. These two are called, by a common designation, «the Cairo Geniza». I have, however, little doubt that the many flourishing Jewish communities which, during the Middle Ages, were spread all over Egypt, from Qūṣ and the Fayyūm down to practically all provincial towns of the delta, have also left us Genizas, and I use this opportunity to draw the attention of future excavators and buyers of antiquities to this possibility.

The amount of material brought to light from the Cairo Geniza is very considerable. The late Solomon Schechter estimated that he alone had brought to the University Library in Cambridge over a hundred thousand leaves, and I am inclined to believe that this is an under-estimate ⁽¹⁾. Of these, according

(1) According to J. D. Pearson, *Oriental Manuscript Collections in the Libraries of Great Britain and Ireland*, London 1954, pp. 26-7, the so-called Taylor Schechter Collection of the University Library, Cambridge, contains about 27,700 items. But most of these are literary texts composed of several, and sometimes of very many, leaves.

to H. Hirschfeld ⁽¹⁾, about 12,000 are in Arabic, though mostly in Hebrew characters. Beside Cambridge, there exist 15 other collections of Geniza fragments outside Russia, five of which contain several thousands of fragments, while Leningrad is notorious for its particularly valuable Geniza treasures. It is useful to compare with this the numbers given by A. Grohmann in his recent publication called *From the World of Arabic Papyri*, Cairo 1952, pp. 2-3. Grohmann estimates that in all collections known to him there exist in all about 16,000 papyri and 33,000 pieces of paper written in Arabic characters, making a total of some 50,000.

As I may remark in passing, a considerable number of papers written in Arabic characters have also been preserved in the Geniza, e. g. contracts between Jews and non-Jewish partners, petitions to authorities, and even letters exchanged between Jews. The use of Arabic characters must have been very common among Jews ; for there have been found in considerable quantities transcripts of the Hebrew text of the Bible into Arabic script, often, curiously enough, equipped with the Hebrew vowel signs ⁽²⁾. In many communications written in Hebrew characters, the address or additional notes are given in Arabic.

Purely Muslim material has also found its way into the Geniza. The University Library, Cambridge, has sorted these manuscripts out and keeps them in separate boxes. Recently, Dr. Samuel M. Stern of Oxford has discovered interesting Muslim items among the Geniza papers, such as the oldest Arabic *zajal*, a letter by the famous Muslim mystic Junaid the existence, but not the text of which had been known, and about 20 pieces from the chancellery of the Fatimid caliphs. Obviously, the Jewish secretaries working there had put them aside and partly used them for writing Hebrew texts on their backs. Even illustrated pages of Muslim manuscripts have been found.

(1) *Jewish Quarterly Review* XV (1903), p. 167.

(2) The reason for this strange combination is that Arabic has only three vowel signs, while Hebrew has ten.

Generally speaking, everything coming from the Geniza has some bearing on the mediaeval civilisation of the Middle East. For almost all this material was written in that part of the world, and mostly by people whose mother tongue was Arabic. I should like to confine myself, however, to that section of the Geniza which is most significant in this respect and to which therefore my colleague Professor D. H. Baneth and I have given particular attention : the *non-literary, documentary* Geniza papers. During the last few years I have worked, with the exception of three small ones, through all the 16 known collections of Geniza material outside Soviet Russia, and am now in a position to form some idea about the extent and the character of the material preserved.

The University Library, Cambridge, possesses about 5,000 documentary Geniza papers, of which at least 3,500 are of considerable length and significance. The Bodleian Library in Oxford has a little more than 700 documents, most of which, at least 500, are extensive and valuable. Of the other 14 collections, the most important for our purpose is the Elkan Adler Fund in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. Altogether, I estimate the documents in these 14 collections at 600 to 1000. The total number of Geniza papers of documentary character would thus be about 6,500, of which some 4,500 are self-contained units, each with some merit of its own.

The vast majority of these papers is composed in Arabic. It is by no means easy to define when a man would prefer to write Hebrew and when Arabic. It seems that most letters concerning communal or religious affairs were written in Hebrew, whilst most private and all business letters are in Arabic. Legal deeds, except marriage contracts and bills of divorce, are also mostly in Arabic.

As to the places of origin of these documents, I am not yet in a position to give exact estimates. The only thing I can say is that very many were written outside Egypt, the country where they were found. The order of frequency of the countries of provenance seems to be the following : 1. North Africa, including Sicily and Spain ; 2. Palestine and Syria ; 3. Iraq (mostly

documents emanating from the Babylonian Jewish Academies or the office of the Exilarch) ; 4. Yemen and India ; 5. Byzantium. Very little material has been preserved from Western Christian Europe.

Comparatively few documents have survived from the 10th century. There are not very many from the period of the later Middle Ages, say between 1250 and 1500. If we disregard the more modern papers, which are numerous (and certainly deserve special study), the Geniza documents are therefore a source mainly for Fātimid and Ayyūbid times, and for the former they are more copious than for the latter.

As to form and contents, I believe that more than one half are letters - public, private or business correspondence. As a whole, these letters are markedly different from those published in the various collections of Arabic papyri. They are, as a rule, more extensive and elaborate and far more expressive of sentiments and reflection. This difference certainly does not go back to the fact that they were composed by Jews, while the Arabic papyri were mostly written by non-Jews. It is the difference of time that counts : the average Geniza letter is 250 years later than a letter written on papyrus. I have little doubt that as soon as more Arabic letters written on paper are published, they will prove to be more or less of the same character as those found in the Geniza ⁽¹⁾.

There may still be another reason why most of the letters preserved in the Geniza are different in character from those published so far in the collections of Arabic papyri. These last come mainly either from officials or from people of provincial towns or villages. The Geniza, too, has preserved a certain amount of letters from the Rif, the Egyptian countryside. Most of its material, however, comes from the urban, metropolitan population of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, and therefore from a social milieu different from that of the papyri.

(1) I regret not to have seen the Arabic letters from the Hamburg Library published by Dr. A. Dietrich in typescript. Dr. Dietrich assured me, however, that they were of a type similar to that known from the Arabic papyri.

The second largest group are deeds and contracts, some of public character, such as letters of appointment, resolutions of public bodies, circulars or decrees of Jewish authorities, but most contain private transactions, such as the selling or renting of movable or immovable property, the granting or the payment of loans, the formation or dissolution of partnerships, wills and donations, manumission or sale of domestic servants (who often also act as responsible business agents) and, of course, contracts of marriage and bills of divorce. A marriage contract is often accompanied by a *Taqwīm*, an evaluation of the various items brought in by the bride. These lists constitute a rich source for the knowledge of the material civilisation of the time.

All in all it appears that in Fāṭimid times civil cases were still largely brought before Jewish courts, although actions or deeds made before a Kadi are often referred to. Frequently, and for reasons which still need clarification, the same transaction was made both before a Muslim and a Jewish court, or one part was brought before a public tribunal and a complementary action before a Jewish court. This interplay of Jewish and Muslim law revealed by the Geniza papers is indeed a fascinating subject for research.

Another characteristic group of Genizā documents are pages from the record books of the Rabbinical courts. These minutes of the proceedings of the courts have always struck me by the vividness and lucidity with which they reproduce the depositions of the parties and witnesses. I understood the reasons for this fact when I collected letters of installation of synagogue beadles, who acted also as attendants to the Courts. (A similar deed of the appointment of the Farrāsh of a mosque in 967 is preserved in the Egyptian Library, cf. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri from the Egyptian Library* II, 103-106). There it is made incumbent on the attendant to take down verbatim all what is said in court. The court itself normally had among its three members one Rabbi who was also a professional scribe and who, as we can see from rough copies preserved, took also notes of the proceedings, as they were going on. Thus we hear in these minutes people talk as they actually did in Old Cairo eight or nine hundred years ago.

Finally, the Geniza contains all kinds of lists, such as commercial or private accounts, inventories of libraries, estates, *Tasqī's*, i. e. lists of revenue, in particular from rented houses belonging to pious foundations, lists of donators or taxpayers, or of the receivers of all kinds of proceeds from public charity, medical prescriptions, calendars, etc.

It goes without saying that such a vast and variegated material is apt to enhance considerably our knowledge of the mediaeval civilisation of the Middle East. As a matter of fact, use of Geniza material has already been made by students of Muslim History, e. g. by Dr. Rāshid Barāwī in his thesis about the *Economic History of Egypt under the Fāṭimids* (in Arabic, Cairo 1948). Dr. Barāwī had at his disposal only Jacob Mann's book *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (Cambridge 1920 and 1922), which is based almost exclusively on Hebrew Geniza papers and which, as its subtitle indicates, was intended to be a contribution to the political and social, but not to the economic history of the Jews. Notwithstanding this, Dr. Barāwī was able to cull from Mann's book a number of interesting pieces of information. However, once the countless business letters preserved in the Geniza are published or at least adequately described, the history of mediaeval Middle Eastern trade, which according to the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (R. H. Lopez, vol. 2, 537) is practically an unexplored field, will be far more substantially known than has been the case so far.

Let me illustrate this by some of the conclusions which force themselves on the student who scrutinizes the Geniza material connected with the trade to India. I have paid special attention to this material and brought together about 140 items related to it. The most salient fact brought home by the Geniza papers is the predominance of merchants from North Africa in this trade. The coastal towns of East Africa, South Arabia, India and Ceylon were flooded with people coming not only from the bigger cities of the Muslim West, such as Barqa, Tripoli, Qairawān, al-Mahdiyya, Tlemcen, Sijilmāsa, Fez, Tanger and Malaga, but also from small and out of the way places, such as Nafūsa in Tripoli, Urbus (= Lorbeus) in Tunisia, and Der'a in Morocco.

In a stimulating essay, published in the *Revue of the Faculty of Commerce of Istanbul University*, 1952, Professor Bernard Lewis undertook to show that the Fāṭimids endeavoured to take the India trade out of the hands of their Iraqi rivals. As we learn now from the Geniza papers, we must think of the Fāṭimids in this respect as an originally North African Power. In addition to political and religious factors, strong social-economic forces must have been at work in this development. The economic history of North Africa, as seen from the Geniza papers, obviously was this : In the early centuries of Islam, North Africa was a colonial area which attracted the expanding merchants of Persia, Iraq and Syria. Therefore we find in North Africa so many Jews bearing the names of towns in Asia, as far as Nisābūr and Samarqand, Wāsiṭ or Baṣra. From the fourth century, however, North Africa itself had become so rich that, in its turn, it sought expansion and found it in the Indian and Far Eastern trade. Thus the Fāṭimids in their effort to push eastwards could make use of the social-economic upsurge of their North African hinterland.

The provenance of the India merchants is significant enough. Even more instructive is a study of the goods which, according to the Geniza, were shipped to and from India. I have made a provisional list which comprises 74 commodities going West and 103 going East. Those coming from the East can be classified as follows :

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| A. Spices, aromatics, dyeing and varnishing
plants and medical herbs..... | 36 items |
| B. Iron and steel (a chief commodity)..... | 6 varieties |
| C. Brass vessels..... | 12 items |

This group may be a special case. I have the impression that North African Jews, especially one, of whom we have many documents, developed this industry in an Indian town with the help of Yemenite Jewish craftsmen referred to in a letter, because the raw materials, as well as the ingredients, of this industry were shipped to India from the West.

D. Silk and other textiles and clothes, only.....	8 items
E. Pearls, beads, cowryshells and ambergris.....	4 —
F. Chinese porcelain, Yemenite stone pots and African ivory.....	3 —
G. Tropical fruits, such as mangoes and coco-nuts	5 —
TOTAL.....	<u>74</u>

It goes without saying that this list does not cover all the exports from India and other Eastern countries known to us from literary sources. Thus timber was a very important item of export from India, but never occurs in my texts, which obviously can only mean that at that time Jews did not specialize in this commodity, although, in later centuries, the timber trade became one of their favourite occupations. Likewise, there is in the whole of the Geniza, as far as I have read it, not a single reference to slave trade by Jews, either in Indian and African or Mediterranean waters, while, in earlier centuries, Jews were heavily engaged in the export of slaves from Europe to the realm of Islam.

As eastbound (sent from Egypt and other Mediterranean countries) the following commodities appear in the Geniza papers :

A. Textiles (including silk which, at certain periods, was a means of payment in the same way as gold).	36 items
B. Vessels and ornaments of silver, brass, glass and other materials.....	23 —
C. Household goods, such as carpets, mats, frying- pans, tables, etc.....	7 —
D. Chemicals, medicaments, soap, paper, books.....	19 —
E. Metal and ingredients for the brass industry (see above).....	7 —
F. Corals (a staple article of first-rate importance)...	1 —
G. Food-stuffs, such as cheese, sugar, olive oil and raisins, linen oil for lamps, etc.....	10 —
TOTAL.....	<u>103 —</u>

India and Africa exported mostly raw materials and metals, while the Middle East sent mostly industrial products and

consumer goods, which, it appears from the documents, were needed largely by the Westerners living out in India or Aden or East Africa. This situation has some similarity to the relations of Europe with her spheres of colonial expansion in modern times.

I have allowed myself to draw some general conclusions from the documents referring to the India trade, for these were collected by me as completely as possible, copied from the originals in full and their contents made accessible through detailed indices of subject matters, terms and names. A similar procedure is in progress with regard to other fields of the social and cultural history of the mediaeval Middle East. Before this work is completed or at least far more progressed, it would be premature to evaluate fully the historical significance of the Cairo Geniza. For these documents normally are single, unrelated leaves, mostly in a poor state of preservation, and their interpretation presents great difficulties of palaeography, linguistics and subject matter. Therefore one cannot claim to have actually understood such a document, before one has transcribed and translated it and compared it to as many documents as possible of a similar character and coming from the same place and time. Unfortunately, however, the Geniza papers have been scattered all over the world. Even one single letter may have to be pieced together from fragments found today in three different continents ⁽¹⁾. Thus a really full survey of the Geniza material will still require a considerable time. In what follows, I will indicate some of the fields on which information from this source will be forthcoming.

Naturally, not much can be expected from the Geniza for political and military history. The letters often contain short references to major events — which mostly meant tribulation

(1) Such is the case of a letter in which, in 1161, the Exilarch Daniel ben Hisdai of Bagdad confirmed Nathan'el, the Head of the Cairine Jewish Academy, in his office. The letter was reconstituted by S. Assaf from one fragment in the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, another in the University Library, Cambridge, and a third in the Antonin Collection in Leningrad. Cf. J. Mann, *Texts and Studies* I, (1931), 230-5. My collection of papers concerning the trade to India contains quite a number of documents composed of fragments found in different collections.

or even disaster for the subject population —, such as the expansion of the Almoravids and Almohades in North Africa or the incessant maritime warfare and piracy in the Mediterranean. It is astonishing how little reference is made to Europe, although these Arabic speaking Jews regularly travelled on Genoese or Pisan ships, and I have the impression that the « Rum » ships moving from North Africa to Sicily or along the Sicilian coast also were Italian rather than Byzantine. Marseille was frequented by these Jews, but, with one possible exception, I have not yet come across a single reference to visits to North Italian ports, let alone to events of general impact on the mainland of Europe. There are many references and allusions to Muslim dignitaries and other personalities all over the Muslim world, from Spain to Syria and from Sicily to Yemen. However, these references to personalities are, as a rule, as short as those to events. The value of both consists in the fact that they illustrate their topic from an angle naturally absent in our historical sources, namely from the view point of the non-Muslims.

In some cases, more detailed descriptions of events of general significance are found in the Geniza papers. Thus, the persecution of Christians and Jews under the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim appears now under a very different light from that derived from the literary sources. As late as in January 1012, al-Ḥākim is praised in a Hebrew « Scroll » as a Messiah-like prince of justice, who protects the non-Muslims against unfounded accusations. The sudden outburst against Christians and Jews appears now as a popular outbreak against the liberal rule of the Fāṭimids rather than as a personal whim of a caliph. Many details about this event and its aftermath can be culled from the Geniza, as the reader may learn from Jacob Mann's above-mentioned book. Likewise, the predominant role of the Jewish Tustarī brothers at the Fatimid court, who came to a cruel end in 1048, is illustrated by many Geniza fragments published or discussed by Mann in the book referred to, as well as in his later publication *Texts and Studies from Jewish History and Literature*. The two extensive letters referring to the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099, published by

me in the *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 1952, will be welcomed by the Mediaevalists, as they come from a time and a place from which only very few documents have survived. There exist many other Geniza letters coming from or referring to Palestine in the time of the Crusades. Two eyewitness reports on an attack of the ruler of Kish (Qais) in the Persian Gulf on Aden in 1135 are useful, as they allow us to compare the technique of the Arab historiographers of the time with factual reports ⁽¹⁾. A hitherto unpublished fragment from Alexandria praises Saladin for having reduced the custom-duties for non-Muslims, both local and foreign, to one half, i. e. the same rate that the Muslims had to pay. A cryptic remark of al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ* (ed. 1270), vol. I, p. 111, l. 11, possibly refers to this event. An interesting letter from Aden of 1202, published by D. H. Baneth in the *J. N. Epstein Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem 1950, echoes vividly the tribulations which visited Yemen, when its ruler, Saladin's nephew al-Malik al-Mu'izz, was murdered and replaced by his infant brother, while the Atabek Sunqur actually ruled the country. A still unpublished letter from Aleppo, written in December 1236, pictorially describes the slaughter wrought by the «Tatars» in the environment of the town, especially round al-'Imrāniyya, a place of pilgrimage for the adherents of several religions. «Tatars» obviously refers to the Khwārizmian bands.

These examples, which stretch over three centuries and come from four different countries, are apt to illustrate the type of information to be gathered from the Cairo Geniza with regard to the general course of history. It is not much, and I do not believe that much hitherto unnoticed material will come to light.

On the other hand, it seems that the Geniza contains much information with regard to the working of the administrative machinery of the Muslim states, especially — but not exclusively — as far as the non-Muslim population was affected. There are many references to the *jāliya* and some to the *jizya*,

(1) *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XVI, 1954, 247-257.

two terms which mostly, though obviously not always, are identical and denote the special impositions to be borne by the non-Muslim subjects. They were by no means merely nominal payments, but must have constituted a heavy burden, for we frequently read about imprisonment in connection with the *jāliya* both of people from the lower ranks of society and of sons of prominent merchants. The poor, contrary to the provisions of Muslim law, had to pay the poll-tax. Payment was made by the community, whether in towns, such as Cairo or Jerusalem, or in villages. As had been the case in Byzantine times and in the period of the Arabic papyri ⁽¹⁾, this imposition under the Ayyūbids had to be paid in one's place of origin, and everybody had to carry with him a *barā'a* certifying that he had fulfilled his duty. In addition, special permits for travel were necessary; thus we read, *inter alia*, that when a renowned physician from Alexandria went to Cairo, his son was imprisoned, although the old man carried his *barā'a* with him, and there are several cases of persons who were ordered down from boats on which they had embarked, in connection with this *jāliya*. A Palestinian schoolmaster teaching in a little town in Egypt had to go up every year to Cairo to pay his poll-tax there to the *Jāliyat ash-Shām*, the office for Palestino-Syrians, an interruption of his work which (with the possible exception of his pupils) caused much irritation to the community. A notable from Ascalon, recommending a scholar from Damascus who had some business in Egypt, to one of his Cairine friends, assures him that the bearer of the letter carried with him a fully certified *barā'a* of his poll-tax, so that his hosts might be sure that they would incur no trouble. Obviously, the *ghurabā'*, the foreigners, caused much trouble because of their *jāliya*. Thus a young man, serving as Muqaddam or head of the Jewish community in a little town in Egypt, writes to his father, a Judge of the Rabbinical court of Cairo, that he would prefer to study instead of wasting his life with chanting the prayers for the villagers and having to look after the foreigners all the time ⁽²⁾.

(1) Cf. *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, III, 137-8.

(2) All these details are taken from still unpublished fragments.

The care of foreigners was of course only one of the many functions of the local Muqaddam in which the central Government was interested. Normally, all the social services, such as provision for the poor, the widows and orphans, the sick and the invalids, for education and of course all religious needs, including burial, were left to the initiative of the community. This explains, why even in small places the elected Muqaddam had to receive authorisation from the Sultan. This detail may be gathered, as well as many other interesting aspects of life in the smaller Egyptian communities, from a number of documents published by D. H. Baneth in the *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, Hebrew Section, New York, 1950, 75-93.

How far the life of the Jewish communities in general, and especially in the bigger towns, with their honorary and paid officers, their œcumenical and local leaders, their variegated aristocracy and their almost democratic institutions, was characteristic of the period in general or rather was a belated survival from Hellenistic and Roman times, remains still to be investigated.

It would be, however, wrong to assume that Government did not take interest in the inner life of the non-Muslim communities. The Academy of Jerusalem, the highest Jewish religious authority in the Fāṭimid state, received a substantial grant towards its maintenance from the Fāṭimid caliphs, which gave the latter, of course, some influence on the election of the Head of the Academy. A recently published document has thrown new light on this state of affairs ⁽¹⁾. In general, appointments to leading public posts required confirmation by the Government. But even purely religious matters were brought before it, for instance when the opponents to the pietist reforms of Abraham, the son of Maimonides, decried them as a *bid'a*, a forbidden innovation, in a petition to al-Malik al-Ādil, Saladin's brother and successor on the throne of Egypt ⁽²⁾.

Reference has already been made to the many documents,

(1) Cf. « Congregation versus Community », in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. XLIV, 1954, 291-304 ; « Petitions to Fatimid Caliphs », *ibid.*, vol. XLV, 30-38.

(2) *Homenaje a Millás-Vallcrosa*, Barcelona 1954, 707-720.

in which we see Muslim and Jewish law in operation at the same time. Future research into this matter will have to consider also the Byzantine local law of pre-Islamic Egypt, which seems to contain many rulings and formularies similar to those found in the Geniza, and obviously also in Islamic law. In some cases, especially with regard to immovable property, direct influence of Muslim juridical practice seems to be evident, e. g. in the strange calculation of the shares in the proprietorship of a house on the basis of imaginary 24 parts. This calculation is the same as in the Muslim law of inheritance, in which the shares to be divided among the heirs are reckoned in this way ⁽¹⁾. In a fourteenth century lawsuit in Bilbeis (1332), one party contended outright that it was customary for transactions on houses to be brought before a Muslim court.

Naturally, it is economic history which will gain most from a careful perusal of the Geniza material. Specimens have been given above concerning the trade with the countries on the Indian Ocean. The documents referring to it are, however, only a small fraction of the business documents preserved. The prices of land, houses, rents and merchandise of all descriptions, its transfer from one country to another, the technique of business, its scope and ethos, the cost of living, the organisation of industrial undertakings, such as the manufacture of glass or sugar — all this and many other topics will find illustration from the Geniza. A petition to a Fātimid caliph in favour of a Karaite weaver employed in a state workshop in Damascus brings home the importance attached to the artisan in Muslim civilisation ⁽²⁾.

Another subject on which the Geniza is particularly rich in material is family life. A marriage deed in that time was not a formulary, but a real contract. It is usually very informative on the economic and social position of the two parties. In addition to the numerous marriage contracts, many rulings and records of courts and, last but not least, countless letters deal mainly or exclusively with family matters.

(1) *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library* I, 172.

(2) Cf. the second article mentioned above, p. 87, note 1.

Even a cursory perusal of the material in hand shows that the actual position of women was far more favourable than might have been gathered from the books of the lawyers and other literary sources. Jewish society — as befitting a thoroughly bourgeois class — then practically was monogamous. In the hundreds of relevant documents studied by me, I have found only one single case of bigamy so far, and that in a provincial town (Bilbeis), in the lowest stratum of society and in quite special circumstances : for, as the nuptial agreement stipulates that the second wife should take care of her future husband's daughter, clearly the first wife was insane or ill or otherwise incapable of looking after her child. Normally a marriage contract — including the case just mentioned — contains the condition that the future husband is not allowed to take an additional wife or a concubine. In the Arabic papyri, the wife sometimes receives the right to « dismiss » the second wife, if she does not please her ⁽¹⁾. I wonder, however, whether the still unpublished Muslim marriage contracts, which are contemporary with the Geniza papers, do not contain the same « usual condition » — as it is called —, namely that the husband undertakes not to marry a second wife at all. In the Geniza contracts, the wife often receives the right to choose the domicile of the family, and the husband is not allowed to travel except « with her consent or on her command ». Naturally, there exist also contracts where the husband fixes the domicile and reserves for himself the right to take his wife with him on any travel he may undertake. To be sure, all such details were discussed in Jewish legal literature (the « Talmud ») already in Roman times, but the Geniza shows how they worked in practice — often to the advantage of the female partner.

According to Jewish (Talmudic) law, a wife cannot dispose of her own property, as long as her husband is alive. In the Geniza papers we see that women often freely dispose of their property and that a husband, when going on travel, sometimes grants to his wife the right to dispose even of his own property.

(1) *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library* I, p. 72, l. 12-4 ; p. 87, l. 8.

In this development I see not so much the influence of Muslim law than the working of social forces.

Women frequently appear as senders of letters, but I have the impression that these letters were mostly written by professional scribes or by other men, and in two cases I was able to identify the handwriting of the men who wrote letters sent by women. Likewise, the very tenor of letters sent to women seems to point to the fact that they were destined to be read to them. There existed, however, literate women, and in the very rare cases where I found letters destined for the eyes, and not the ears, of a wife, I was struck by the tenderness and the note of complete equality expressed in them. Normally, letters sent by a mother to her son or by a brother to his sister are more personal than letters exchanged between husband and wife. I have come across so far only of two cases of maltreatment and wife-beating (both in villages), but owing to the extent of material not yet closely studied, it would be premature to draw any conclusions from this fact.

Illness looms very largely in both private and business correspondence. I wonder whether this phenomenon prevails to the same extent in the Greek papyri. It is not unusual to find the complaint that business could not be done because everybody was confined to bed, or that after treatment the state of the patient had considerably worsened. As today, people tried to be treated by a famous specialist. A detailed description of the state of the sick person would be sent to the great doctor — who often would be also a person of high social status — through the mediation of some notable, and the doctor would send his prescription back through the same channel. It is characteristic of this bookish civilisation that the physician would let his patient know according to which book of which famous author he treated him.

As pointed out above, the great majority of the Geniza fragments are literary texts. These, together with the many inventories of books preserved, convey a vivid picture of the spiritual life of the time. They show that the educated Jews read not only books of Jewish content, but were lively interested in secular subjects, especially philosophy and science. However,

the literary Geniza texts are outside the scope of this article.

Needless to say, the Cairo Geniza is also a particularly rich source for the history of Arab language and of the changes affecting its morphology, vocabulary, syntax and style. Many types of Arabic are found in these documents, from the elaborate creations, in purely classical Arabic, of the Spanish Jewish men of letters to plain prose bearing the imprint of the Maghribī, Egyptian or Yemenite dialects. Very rarely, however, the language becomes actually colloquial or « vulgar ». It is a semi-literary style bearing local colour rather than an undisciplined idiom. Strangely enough, some Egyptian vulgarisms which occur already in the Arabic papyri, have not yet been found by me in the Geniza.

In conclusion I should like to say that the highest reward of the arduous task of decyphering and interpreting Geniza papers is the intimate insight they give us into the soul of mediaeval Eastern man. This is particularly so in private letters, but the business letters, too generally make very good reading. These merchants were very human, extremely polite and at the same time took a philosophical view about gains and losses. Many of them were scholars and public figures and some even poets. I believe, Adam Mez is right in assuming that the most representative propagators of the fully developed mediaeval civilisation of the Middle East were the merchants. As the documentary papers preserved in the Geniza mostly emanated from this class, they constitute an abundant source for the knowledge of that great civilisation.

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Bibliographical Notes

Some general information about the Cairo Geniza and the research done on it is found in my articles « From the Mediterranean to India ; documents on the trade to India, South Arabia and East Africa from the eleventh and twelfth centuries », *Speculum*, April 1954, and « What would General and Jewish history benefit by a systematic publication of the documentary Geniza papers », *Proceedings of the American Jewish Academy*, 1954.

Cf. also David Gonzalo Maeso, *La Gueniza de El Cairo y sus Exploraciones*, *Miscelanea de Estudios Arabes y Hebraicos, Universidad de Granada*, 1952, 3-25.



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NEW LIGHT ON THE BEGINNINGS OF THE KĀRIM MERCHANTS

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

As is well known, a first comprehensive study of the subject was made as early as 1937 by W. J. Fischel¹). It is, however, a telling testimony to the newly aroused vivid interest in the economic development of the mediaeval Near East, that no less than three extensive studies have been devoted to it of late, by Dr. Sobhy Labib, Professor Gaston Wiet and Dr. E. Ashtor respectively²).

In surveying the results of the studies made so far, Professor Cl. Cahen arrives at the conclusion that the earliest reliable evidence of the existence of the Kārim in Egypt is Maqrīzī's statement about it relating to the reign of Saladin³).

It is the purpose of the following lines to show that we are now in a position to push further back into the history of the Kārim, as it appears already in documents dating undoubtedly from the Fatimid period. These documents — all in Hebrew characters, but mostly in Arabic language — come from the so-called Cairo Geniza, whose treasures are

1) W. J. Fischel, "Über die Gruppe der Kārimi-Kaufleute", *Studia Arabica* I, Rome 1937.

2) Dr. Sobhy Labib, "Al-tijāra al-Kārimiyya wa-tijārat Miṣr fī l'uṣūr al-wustā", *Majallat al-jam'īya al-Miṣriyya lil-dirāsāt al-ta'riḥiyya*, Cairo 1952.

Gaston Wiet, "Les marchands d'épices sous les sultans mamlouks", *Cahiers d'Histoire Égyptienne*, Cairo 1955.

E. Ashtor, "The Karimi Merchants", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* April 1956.

It is also very significant that these three studies have been made independently of each other. Wiet, p. 147, remarks that his manuscript was already in the press, when Labib's article reached him. However, even before Wiet's study was out, Ashtor had sent in his to the JRAS.

3) *Arabica* III, 3, p. 339, identical with p. 97 of the *Revue Bibliographique*. Maqrīzī relates in his *Sulūk* I, 72-3, that the Kārimis came to Egypt in 1181, where they had to pay duties for several years.

now dispersed all over the world¹). That repository of discarded writings contained a great many letters and deeds dealing with trade and travel between the Mediterranean and the Indian ocean during the eleventh and twelfth centuries²). It is most revealing to learn what they have to tell us about the Kārim, both explicitly and by their silence.

The first two items concern a merchant and shipowner (Nākhodā) of Aden, Maḥrūz b. Jacob, who is referred to in twelve documents. One of these is dated February-March 1134; however, even without that detail, his time could be fixed, as many other wellknown personalities are mentioned in the letters concerned.

Maḥrūz' center of activities was Aden and, as his mother lived there and as he is styled al-'Adanī, he most probably also was born in that town. Sometimes he is found travelling in his own ship, which followed the course Mangalore-Aden³), but more often he used others, e.g. one of the ships belonging to Maḍmūn, the "Representative of the (Jewish) Merchants" of Aden, who was also the Head of the Jewish community of Yemen. Maḥrūz' sister was married to Judah b. Joseph Cohen, the

1) Cf. S. D. Goitein, "The Cairo Geniza as a source for the History of Muslim Civilisation", *Studia Islamica* II, 1955.

2) A report about these papers and their proposed edition is contained in my article "From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth century", *Speculum*, Cambridge, Mass. XXIX, 2, April 1954. However, meanwhile the number of documents collected on the subject has raised from 130 (cf. *ib.* p. 184) to 233, of which about 190 have direct bearing on it, while the rest contains details about the activities of India traders in Spain or North Africa etc.

I am also glad to announce that the documents belonging to the Kaufmann Collection of the Hungarian Academy, which, at the writing of that article, were believed to be lost (*ib.*, p. 185, note), meanwhile have been found and put at my disposal by the courtesy of the Academy authorities.

3) A most characteristic aspect of mediaeval sea traffic, emanating from the Geniza papers, is the rule that ships had their fixed route connecting two, or at most three, ports. Thus a ship, coming from Aden, would not call, after having crossed the ocean, at the different ports on the west coast of India — the documents mention 16 —, but only at one or two. In the paper mentioned in the previous annotation, p. 193, note 22, a technical reason was adduced for this usage. Another factor no doubt was the endeavour to avoid the exorbitant port duties. In addition, I wonder whether in mediaeval, like in our own times, ships had not to get special permits for loading or unloading goods in a harbour.

"Representative of the (Jewish) Merchants" in Cairo, the scion of a very ancient family with connections in Iraq, Palestine and North Africa. Sometimes we find Maḥrūz also in Cairo, where he conducted the business affairs of the family, at the time when his illustrious brother-in-law was away (most probably in India, where he once was captured by pirates), while the latter's brother — perhaps a minor lumen — was sent to Alexandria for supervising the expedition of goods to al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia.

Thus, the scene is set for appreciating the references to the Kārim made in connection with Maḥrūz. One is made in a letter dictated by him in Aden on the very day on which he was embarking for India, after having returned from that country only a short time before. By chance, that letter, which was directed to a son of his still living brother-in-law in Cairo, has come down to us in two complete copies¹). Among other items, the writer mentions in it that he had sent various presents or commodities ordered with a person travelling from Aden to Cairo, while he had bought for the addressee 60 mann of Tabāshīr (crystals extracted from bamboos²)), which he had delivered to the representative of the merchants in Aden, Maḍmūn, *yunfiduḥa fi'l-Kārim ma'a man yarā* "in order to forward it "in the Kārim" with whomever he found suitable."

Far more detailed is a reference in a fragment, which was cut out from a letter in order to use its blank back for writing on it some list. Although only a very small part of the letter is conserved, containing neither the name of the sender nor that of the addressee, the name of the former can be ascertained with certainty and that of the latter with great probability. For the handwriting of that letter is none other than that of Judah b. Joseph Cohen, the Cairine merchants' representative referred to above, while the mentioning of "my brother-in-law Maḥrūz" confirms the identity, which is, however, above doubt, as many letters and deeds have emanated from Judah's hand during 1125-1145. The addressee most probably was his partner in the India trade, Halfōn b. Nathan'el, also a member of a very high standing family, who must have

1) Nos. 134-5 of my India Collection. Ms. University Library Cambridge, T.-S. 16.345 and British Museum Or. 5542, p. 17.

2) Cf. M. Meyerhof, Un glossaire de matière médicale composé par Maimonide, Cairo 1940, p. 84, no. 171, where many details about this material, which served as a constituent in collyriums, tonics, astringents etc. are given.

been at that time — as he often was — in Aden, because the writer informs him that he was forwarding him his mail through a person, named in the letter, to Maḍmūn, the representative of the merchants in that town¹).

Owing to its importance, I give the passage referring to the Kārim in full:

Amma l-Kārim qad waṣalanī minhu kitāb min ‘ind šibrī Maḥrūz min Sawākin yaḥkī annahu 3 ālāf ‘idl waqad ḥaraj fī l-Kārim min aṣḥābina l-Yabūd 7 Maḥrūz (there follow six other names) *lā gair*²).

“As far as the Kārim is concerned — I got a letter from³) it, from my brother-in-law Maḥrūz from Sawākin, telling that it contained (literally: it was) 3 thousand bales and that there travelled homewards⁴) in the Kārim of our Jewish business friends 7: Maḥrūz etc., not more”.

Five out of the six India traders mentioned in addition to Maḥrūz are known from other documents, and as one of these is from 1097, while another is dated 11 September 1149, it is feasible to assume that our letter was written between these two dates, in the twenties or thirties of the twelfth century — which we have already known as the time of Maḥrūz’ activities.

The situation reflected in the letter is as follows: the Cairine representative of the Jewish merchants informs his partner, who at that time was in Aden, (a) of the volumen of trade carried in that year by the Kārim, (b) the names of the addressee’s business friends, who had safely arrived at Sawākin on their way home (to Egypt and North Africa). From this it follows that the Kārim did not touch in that particular year

1) Announcements of this kind are a very common feature in mediaeval correspondence. They were made in order to enable the receiver of such a message to trace his mail quickly at the arrival of a ship or a caravan. In the case under discussion, the addressee was expected to proceed further to the East. Therefore, his mail was forwarded not to him, but to the representative of the merchants in Aden.

2) No. 221 of the India Collection. Ms. British Museum Or. 5549, III, fol. 5 recto, l.6 — margin, l.5.

3) Thus, and not “about”, which would have to be ‘anhu even in the rather vernacular style of the letter.

4) *Haraj* means in the language of the India traders “coming out from the sea”, travelling homewards. The same usage is alive in the Arabic spoken in Yemen up to the present day.

Aden, but went direct to the East African port, either from India or from some port in Southern Persia, like Tiz, or in Eastern Arabia, like Mirbāt. In the 1097 document, referred to above, we have another instance of ships going direct from Mirbāt to the East African coast, without touching Aden — a practice which is in conformity with the conditions of sea travel of those times in general, cf. p 176, note 3. We cannot make out, from where the sender dispatched our letter. I suppose, from ‘Aidhāb, which is north of Sawākin and from where one usually travelled from or to Aden, for the writer mentions that he forwarded the addressee’s letters; it could be, however, Cairo itself, as well.

As can be ascertained from the names of the persons mentioned, another document referring to the Kārim — very defective, but containing interesting details — is to be attributed to the same period, as those just discussed. In it, a man, who had travelled from Kullam (Quillon) westwards, but was again on his way to India, sends to his wife in Cairo a number of presents, including a six years old slave girl, pearl bracelets, Lālas¹) garments, a bronze basin and a ewer. As to the forwarding, he says:

wa-ana, in šā’ Allah, unfiduhum šuḥbat man yaḥ(ruj fi) l-Kārim.

“I shall send them, if God will, with somebody, who is travelling home²) in the Karim.”³)

At the end of the same letter, in a context, which is too much damaged to be interpreted with any degree of certainty, the writer mentions that a certain Abū Surūr Cohen Ibn al-Dawānīqī carried for him *sufra-tain lilmā’ida*, two table cloths, and other commodities

in šā’ Allah taṣil ilaika fi l-Kārim mšb(. . .⁴)

“if God will, these commodities will reach you in the Kārim (loaded on the ship?).⁴)

1) Lālas or Lānas, explained by the dictionaries as a kind of red silk, occurs very frequently in the Geniza as an export article of India.

2) See p. 178, note 4.

3) No. 214 of the India book. Ms. University Library Cambridge, T.-S., New Series 723.

4) The word is tentatively complemented as *mašb ūnatan* and translated “loaded on the ship” with the possible explanation, that the consignment referred to formed part of the general cargo and was not forwarded under the supervision of a traveller, as usually merchandise was sent. However, I have not come across, so far, any passage proving such a usage.

Finally, in a very long letter, sent from Ma'bar, the south-eastern coast of India, to Cairo at the time of Maḍmūn, the above mentioned representative of merchants at Aden (died in 1151), a man informs his wife that he was sending her several items of Oriental spices and fruits, among them seven and a half mann of Jauza (nutmeg)

mā fi l-Kārim mitluhā

"the like of which is not to be had in the Kārim"¹).

Before trying to evaluate the data just collected, a few words must be said about the alleged occurrence of Kārim in the texts published by the late Jacob Mann in his book *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, vol. II, Oxford 1922, pp. 246/7. Mann was a very great scholar, but he was not an Arabist and, consequently, his renderings of Arabic texts, even while written in Hebrew letters, have to be used with caution. Thus he read the heading of the list under discussion as "*al-dinār 3*", which is, of course, senseless, and for which he suggested the reading *al-daḥīr*, "adopted son", a word which never occurs in the Geniza texts. Actually, the original has simply: *alladī ḥaraj*, which means: Expenditure. For this is not, as Mann believed, a list of donators or taxpayers, but, at the reverse, of persons who were in receipt of emoluments from the community, such as rabbis, judges, scribes, beadles, blind or otherwise disabled people, foreigners, prisoners in need etc. What Mann read as *Kārimīn* or *Kurrām*, is nothing but *Ḥādīmain* or *Ḥuddām* respectively, meaning the beadles of the two synagogues of Old-Cairo²).

Coming back to the authentic Geniza texts mentioning the Kārim in Fatimid times, the following conclusions seem to be obvious:

(1) By the beginning of the twelfth century, al-Kārim had become a household word in Cairo: any woman, whose husband was out in the Indian ocean knew that she could expect sendings forwarded by him "in the Kārim".

1) India book no. 176. Ms. Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, Adler Collection 2739, fol. 16.

2) Likewise *kārim al-kanīsa* on p. 246 is to be read *ḥādīm*. These beadles were officials with many duties, comparable to, but in many respects also different from, those of the Farrāsh of a mosque. As I intend to publish a number of letters of appointment of such beadles, I shall be grateful for material about Farrāshs in Fatimid times. Cf. A. Grohmann APEL II 103 - 106.

(2) On the other hand, the term “Kārimī”, K. merchant, has not yet been found in the Geniza with regard to Fatimid times.

(3) The K. does not appear as a company handling goods, but rather as a convoy or group of *nākhodās*, in whose ships merchants travelled and goods were transported under the personal supervision of their owners or the owners’ representatives, just as it was the case with the ships of *nākhodās* not belonging to the K. (see, however, note 4 on page 179).

(4) The K. convoy sometimes touched Aden on his way out from India and some times passed it by. This could have been due to navigation conditions (such as a stormy sea) or political circumstances (such as a siege on Aden)¹), but it is more likely that there operated a certain rotating system, by which the K. one year entered the port of Aden and the other it did not.

(5) When an India trader, far out on the Coromandel Coast — cf. above p. 180 — writes to his family in Cairo, that he was sending them a commodity of a quality “not found even in the K.”, this seems to show that the traders cooperating in the K. were renowned for the high standards of their wares.

(6) The quantity of 3000 bales carried by the K. in one year — see above p. 178 — is very considerable. The biggest single consignment from the East going to Egypt, which I have come across in the Geniza papers was one of 60 bales of lac, weighing 100 Bahār (totalling 30 000 Ratl; one bale (‘idl) 500 Ratl). However, these were sent by two most prominent persons in partnership, Bilāl b. Jarīr al-Auḥādī, who afterwards became the vizier and actual ruler of southern Yemen²), and Maḍmūn, the representative of the (Jewish) merchants of Aden. The total of one million and a half Ratl may appear to the modern reader as a relatively small quantity. But one has to keep in mind that the Oriental

1) Cf. the present writer’s paper “Two Eyewitness Reports on an Expedition of the King of Kīsh (Qais) against Aden”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London 1954, XVI/2.

2) This outstanding figure in the history of Yemen certainly deserves an article in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. For the time being cf. *ib.* under (banu al-) Karam *passim*, in the article referred to in the previous note, p. 248 and Oscar Löfgren, *Arabische Texte zur Geschichte der Stadt Aden im Mittelalter*, *passim* (cf. Index).

goods carried were mostly high priced luxuries, spices, drugs, dyeing plants etc.

(7) On the other hand, one salient fact is being brought out by the Geniza papers on the Indian trade with absolute certainty: up to 1150 approximately, the Kārim by no means monopolized that trade. At the reverse: extremely little mentioning is made of it; against the five cases discussed here¹), we could adduce perhaps two hundred others of little flotillas or single ships owned by rulers or private persons, which carried goods to and from India.

(8) Nevertheless, the overwhelming importance reached by the K. in Ayyubid and Mamluk times may have had its roots in the Fatimid period. In addition to the very weight of quantity and quality, discussed above under (5) and (6), there might have been the additional factor of special Government protection. It is true that even of Maḍmūn, the representative of the (Jewish) merchants in Aden, it was stated that he had agreements "with the rulers of the seas and the deserts", in order to protect the ships and caravans owned or supervised by him. However, as we learn again from the Geniza papers, piracy was rampant, and there is a far cry from such "Himāya" agreements²) to the powerful protection by the Fatimid navy stationed at 'Aidhāb, which the Kārim enjoyed according to Qalqashandī's detailed and obviously well informed statement³). I am inclined to believe that this special protection had financial, rather than political reasons: the Kārim were able to pay for it, while smaller traders had to put up with the vicissitudes of piracy, which was particularly dangerous in the Red Sea. This additional advantage may explain the final ascendancy of the Kārim.

(9) As to the origins of the Kārim, with the scanty information available, we are hardly justified to try even a conjecture. However, it seems proper to start again the discussion about the name of this body of merchants. As the word is preceded by the article, it does not represent a proper name, but must be originally a general noun. There is no suitable word in Arabic carrying a meaning connected with the

1) See Postscriptum no 2.

2) Cf. Cl. Cahen, "Notes pour l'histoire de la Himaya", *Melanges Louis Massignon*, 1956, Institut Français du Damas.

3) Qalqashandī, *Subḥ* III, 524, 2-6. As the many details given show, the writer must have had here an old source at his disposal.

activities of the K. On the other hand, Dr. A. L. Basham of the London School of Oriental and African Studies, in his letter to me of 26th November 1956, kindly draws the attention to the fact that Tamil has a word *kāryam*, which, among other things, means "business, affairs". As business with the Middle East was the main concern of the commercial people on the west coast of India, it is quite feasible that a body of ship owners and traders engaged in it should have been known — or perhaps even called itself — by that designation.

(10) From this it does not follow at all that the original members of that body of people were solely or even predominantly Hindus. The problem of the history of merchants' corporations in India and their possible influence on the organisation of the trade between that country and the Middle East is a vast subject, which cannot be even touched upon here. In any case, the Geniza papers show clearly that, at least in Fatimid times, Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians worked closely together in the pursuit of the trade between India and the West. As we have seen, the Kārim carried both Jewish passengers and goods, and there is no reason why the same should not apply to the members of any other denomination. The question, whether there was any considerable change in this respect in later periods, lies outside the scope of this article, which is concerned solely with the presentation of the material from the Cairo Geniza known to the present writer as referring to the K. in Fatimid times.

Postscript. 1) Mr. M. Michael, who is engaged in a Ph. D. dissertation on the archive of *Nahrai b. Nissim*, a Cairine notable and business man, who died in 1098, has not found, in the 150 documents copied by him so far, any reference to the Kārim. To be sure, Nahrai did very little business with India; the orbit of his activities was confined mainly to Sicily and North Africa, Syria and Palestine and, above all, to Egypt itself. Although he dabbled to some extent in typically Eastern products, such as camphor, pepper, brazilwood and cinnamon, he traded mainly in (a) linen, cotton and textiles bearing Persian trademarks, (b) wheat, oil, honey and other agricultural products, (c) books (Hebrew, of course) — an important branch of business. The absence of the Kārim from his papers — most of which have been carefully scrutinized by now — is therefore almost natural and no conclusions should be drawn from this fact.

2) After this article was already in print, I was able to identify another reference to the Kārim in a Geniza paper stemming from the Fatimid period.

In a letter, sent around 1140 from Alexandria to Aden (or perhaps another port of the Indian ocean), the writer says:

(1) *Wamā kunnā ġair* (2) *qurūd nantaḍirak* (3) *fī (!) kārīm al-sana* (4) *waqad waṣala kitābak . . .*

“We expected all the time that you would arrive in (!) Kārim this year. Instead, there came your letter . . .” (India book, No. 215, University Library, Cambridge, T.-S. Box 28, fol. 33, p. 1. written upside down on the top of the page).

This is the first occurrence, in these letters, of Kārim without the definite article, which also proves that the word is not Arabic.

Another interesting detail in that long letter is the fact that the addressee, whose mother lived in Alexandria, had stayed (*kān yaskun*) in *Sarḥa*, a little-known anchorage-place in Yemen (see Yāqūt, Geograph. Dict. 3, 71). One could hardly conclude from this passage that the Kārim touched that anchorage.

3) After the proofs of this article had been returned to the printer, a long letter sent from Aden to Aīdhab was found by me in the uncatalogued section of the E. N. Adler Collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. It was written in the thirties or forties of the 12th century. The writer, the wellknown Adenese India trader Joseph b. Abraham, expresses his regret that the addressee, Abu ‘Imrān Ibn Nufai’, had been kept back a long time and under great hardship in Dahlak and continues:

fa-ardjū anna maulānā wa djamī’ al-Kārim yakūnū adrakū (‘Aī)ḥab in shā’ Allāh

“and I hope that you and the whole Kārim have reached ‘Aīdhab, if God will.”

In other Geniza papers of the time, the ruler of Dahlak — which corresponds approximately to modern Massawa — is mentioned as a dangerous pirate. Our letter seems to indicate that the protection of the Fatimid fleet was not always effective — even with regard to the Kārim.



The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History

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THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CAIRO GENIZA AS A SOURCE FOR MEDITERRANEAN SOCIAL HISTORY *

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THE STUDENTS of the history of the Mediterranean countries during the High Middle Ages have often complained about the almost complete absence of archives in Muslim countries. In Europe, the church, the feudal lords, the cities, and the guilds kept their documents both as titles of right and for other purposes. Nothing of the kind is to be found in Muslim countries in that period.¹ Now, it is possible to reconstruct the main lines of political history and to a certain extent also the life of the ruling class with the help of literary sources, supplemented by archaeology, epigraphy, and numismatics, *i. e.* the study of extant buildings and utensils, inscriptions, and coins. However, social and economic history, especially of the middle and lower classes, can hardly be studied without the aid of documents, such as letters, deeds, or accounts actually emanating from people belonging to these classes.

Under these circumstances it is most fortunate that a great treasure of documents, hailing from all over the Mediterranean countries, mainly from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, has been preserved in the so-called Cairo Geniza.² The Hebrew word *genīza*, like Arabic *janāza* (which means "burial"), is derived from the Persian. In Persian, *ganj* denotes a treasure, and its Biblical derivative, especially in Ezra 6:1, stands almost for archive. In mediaeval Hebrew, Geniza, or Beth Geniza, designates a repository of discarded writings. For just as the human body, having fulfilled its task as container of the [heavenly] soul,

should be buried, *i. e.* preserved to await resurrection, thus writings bearing the name of God, having served their purpose, should not be destroyed by fire or otherwise, but should be put aside in a special room designated for the purpose or in a cemetery. Such a room was attached to a synagogue in Fustāt or, as it is known today, Old Cairo, and from there, and to a small extent also from the cemetery al-Basātin near the town, the treasures of the Cairo Geniza, under circumstances which have often been described,³ were dispersed to many libraries all over the world.

This occurred mainly during the last decade of the nineteenth century, beginning with 1890, when a considerable amount of valuable Geniza papers was acquired by the Bodleian Library, Oxford,⁴ and culminating in 1897, when Solomon Schechter transferred the whole of the then still extant treasures of the Geniza chamber to the University Library Cambridge, England. In this country, a very important collection is found at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, brought from Egypt in 1896 by E. N. Adler of London. A smaller, but still extensive collection, whose beginnings go back to 1891, is preserved in the library of the Dropsie College, Philadelphia,⁵ while the Freer Gallery of Washington possesses about fifty, mostly very well preserved documents, which were acquired by Mr. Charles L. Freer in Egypt in 1908. Nothing is known about the provenance of these papers,⁶ but it stands to reason that they came from the cemetery al-Basātin,

* Based on a lecture read at the University of California, Los Angeles, on December 9, 1958.

¹ Cf. J. Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Orient musulman* (Paris 1946), p. 21, where an explanation of this defect is attempted.

² Aspects of the Cairo Geniza documents different from those discussed here have been treated by the present writer in "The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Muslim Civilization," *Studia Islamica*, III (Paris 1955), 75-91, where further literature on the subject is given.

³ See Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (Oxford 1959), chapter 1. N. Golb, "Sixty Years of Genizah Research," *Judaism*, VI (1957), 3-5.

⁴ Cf. A. Neubauer and A. E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, II (Oxford 1906), xii-xvi.

⁵ Cf. B. Halper, *Descriptive Catalogue of Genizah Fragments in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia 1924).

⁶ See Richard Gottheil and William H. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection* (New York 1927), p. v.

where Mr. B. Chapira of Paris excavated Genizah papers in considerable quantities.⁷ A small collection belonging to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania was described by the present writer recently,⁸ and there may still be some papers in private hands.

In order to be in a position to evaluate the Geniza papers as a source of social history, we have to form an idea about their nature and contents, and the localities, the times, and the social layers from which they come.

From the very definition given to the term Geniza above it is evident that it is the opposite of an archive. In an archive one keeps documents in order to use them, if and when necessary. Therefore, much care is taken to preserve them well, and in many cases, they are deposited in the archive immediately after being made out. The opposite was the case with the Geniza. Papers were thrown away there only after they had lost all value to their possessors and consequently, in most cases, only a long time after they had been written. Even family letters, let alone business correspondence, would not have been deposited in a place accessible to everybody except after being deprived of all actuality. However, legal deeds, which conferred rights on their holders, had to be kept by them and their heirs often through generations, before they could be disposed of in the Geniza chamber.

There was another good reason for keeping a document a long time before throwing it into the Geniza. Paper was expensive and therefore normally free space on a document was used for all kinds of purposes, such as drafts, short notes, accounts, or even merely for trying out a pen or for exercises. Thus the MS. T.-S. 16.49 of the University Library Cambridge was drawn up in Fustaṭ on April 26, 987; although long and elaborate, it is a mere acquittance, in which a widow confirms to the family of her husband that she has received all that is due to her according to her marriage contract; thus there was no particular need to keep this document for a very long time. However, the backside of the deed was used for trials of the pen, one of which bears the date of

December 21, 1085, *i. e.* almost a hundred years later.

Naturally, during the many years which elapsed from the execution of a document to its disposal, it deteriorated. The writing became faint, the paper was covered with dark brown stains, it was damaged by holes, and often parts of it were torn away for various uses.

To be sure, many types of paper found in the Geniza, as well as the ink used on them, were of excellent quality, and the scribes of the courts, the clerks of business houses, as well as scholarly persons in general, mostly had a clear and often even a beautiful handwriting. Thus the MS. T. S. 18 J 4, f. 18, represents a business letter sent from Aden to India, to a Jewish merchant from Tunisia, who ran a bronze factory and did other business out in that distant country.⁹ The recipient, having stayed a long time in India, returned to Aden in the autumn of 1149, but remained there and in the interior of Yemen for another three years; then, he had to make the long journey through the Red Sea, the terrible desert between it and the Nile river, and, finally, on the Nile from Upper Egypt to Cairo. Despite the humidity of the climate of India and Aden and the hazards of the journey on sea and through the desert—and the more than eight hundred years which have elapsed since it was written, the letter is in perfect condition, with even the smallest dot or stroke clearly discernible.

Unfortunately, such examples are the exception rather than the rule. Most of the Geniza papers make difficult reading and the great majority of them are fragments, representing the beginning, the end, or the middle or either side of a document, and many thousands are mere tiny fragments.

There is another difference between an archive and the Geniza, which constitutes a great obstacle to research. In an orderly archive, material of the same character normally is kept together in one place, which makes it easy to get information about one topic. However, in the Geniza, everything is topsy-turvy; a volume bound together may contain the following items: a contract for partnership in a glass factory; a letter of congratulation on an appointment; the genealogy of a family; settlement of a claim in Persia; a letter de-

⁷ B. Chapira, *Revue des Études Juives*, LXXXII (1926), 317.

⁸ "The Geniza Collection of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania," *JQR*, XLIX (1958), 35-52.

⁹ The letters addressed to, or written by, this merchant are collected in Chapter Three of the book on the India trade prepared by the present writer; see below, note 18.

scribing the state of an ill person; a page from a recordbook of a court; a deed of manumission of a slave; a circular letter of a communal authority; accounts on parchment made in Tunisia; a letter with religious admonitions; a power of attorney for a divorce; a business letter sent from Spain to Algeria; a will made out in Alexandria; a list of the jewelry, the garments, the linen, and the kitchen utensils brought into marriage by a bride *etc.*

There can be no doubt that many prominent Jews and Jewish families kept archives.¹⁰ Thus we find that the Geniza has preserved over 250 papers addressed to, sent from, or referring to Nahray b. Nissim, a prominent community leader, businessman, and scholar, active in Egypt and the adjacent countries during the second part of the eleventh century.¹¹ About fifty papers connected with the Tunisian Jew in India mentioned before (his family was called Ben Yijū after a Berber tribe¹²) were brought together by the writer of these lines in connection with his work on the India trade according to the Cairo Geniza. Even more were found addressed to or written by another India traveller, Halfon b. Nathan'el, who travelled also frequently to Spain, where he became a most intimate friend of the Jewish poet and philosopher Judah ha-Levi. A number of other personalities and families are represented in the Geniza by so many papers that one has to assume that they belonged originally to carefully preserved collections. In the Geniza, however, these were dispersed and mixed up with documents

from other persons, countries and centuries, and it is up to the laborious efforts of the modern scholar to piece them together again.

The cause for the complete chaos in which the Geniza papers are found is to be sought, to my mind, in the fact that the Geniza was in living use during the whole time of its existence. I remember having seen in it a bill of divorce made out in Bombay as late as 1879, and, as it is unlikely that a document of such a character was disposed of in far away Cairo immediately after the legal act attested by it,¹³ it is not impossible that it landed in the Geniza only a few days before Solomon Schechter arrived in Cairo ready to carry off its entire contents. However, the living use of the Geniza was expressed not only by the continuous addition to its contents, but also by the opposite process. Enterprising people undertook the trouble to get into the dark room, formerly in order to find an ancient prayer book, or even legal formularies or mere scrap paper, but in the latter part of the nineteenth century with the aim of selecting manuscripts suitable for being sold to Europeans and Americans hunting for antiquities. The result of all this was that the whole content of the Cairo Geniza was continuously and completely turned upside down. On the other hand, the enormous variety of material included in it enables us to draw a colorful mosaic of the life of the society reflected in it.

What type of society is reflected in the Cairo Geniza? Before trying to answer this question, it is necessary to discuss briefly a third feature of the Geniza documents, which, in addition to their poor state of preservation and their utter disconnectedness, makes their study so difficult: the language in which they are written. To be sure, the Geniza contains many hundreds of documents written in a beautiful Hebrew, as it was known from contemporary literary sources. Most of this material has been published and used for historical research. However, the vast majority of the Geniza papers, namely most of the private letters and legal deeds, and all business letters and bills were written in Arabic, and of course not in literary, but in living Arabic, which varied according to the country, the century, and the social layer from which they came. The writing of Arabic with

¹⁰ Most probably, the documents were kept in a bag or piece of cloth, folded into narrow strips, as they were sent. Scores of such "archives," consisting of deeds conferring titles of right or important letters, were brought from Yemen to Israel in 1949-50 by the immigrants from that country, where mediaeval customs have in many ways persisted to our days. While the folding into narrow strips—as the Cairo Geniza shows—tends to damage the lines crossed by the folds, it seems, on the other hand, to be conducive to the preservation of a document as a whole. Cf. also R. Gottheil, *JQR*, XIX (London 1907), 469, where the documents from the archive (not the Geniza!) of the Jewish community in Cairo are described as lying folded and rolled in bags.

¹¹ They form the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation by Mr. Murad Michael.

¹² The pronunciation Yago, suggested in *Speculum*, XXIX (1954), 191, note 17, cannot be maintained in the face of the fact that the family name Ben Yijū, spelled in the French way Benichou, is common all over western North Africa even today.

¹³ The document is in the Gaster collection of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England, and bears the number A 960.

Hebrew letters had its contemporary parallel in the writing of the same language by the Syriac Christians in their holy script and in modern times in the writing of Yiddish, which is a Germanic dialect, with Hebrew characters. The Arabic language used by the Jews was not a particular Jewish dialect, although some Hebrew phrases were of course used by the writers, but as the Jews were less tradition bound than their Muslim contemporaries, who wrote in Arabic characters, their Arabic, as a rule, is more colloquial and resembles a language which appears only in later literary sources or in the modern Arabic dialects. Thus the present writer would not have been able to translate quite a number of passages in letters written in Aden in the twelfth century, had he not devoted much time to the study of Arabic as it is spoken in Yemen today.

All this explains why the majority of the Geniza documents, sixty years after their transfer to European and American libraries, still have remained unpublished. For the same reason, it is not surprising that, when their systematic study was taken up again of late, quite a number of unexpected finds were made. To confine ourselves to letters emanating from famous personalities, we have now a letter to Moses Maimonides from his only and beloved brother David on the eve of his setting out on the Indian Ocean, where he perished,¹⁴ significant letters by and about Abraham, the son and successor of Maimonides,¹⁵ and new autograph responsa by Maimonides himself.¹⁶ The most rewarding finds were perhaps four autograph letters by the Spanish-Jewish poet and philosopher Judah ha-Levi and a number of letters to and about him, especially during his journey to the Holy Land, which he immortalized by his poems.¹⁷

¹⁴ To be published as No. 178 of the collection of documents concerning the Indian trade; see note 18.

¹⁵ Cf. the present writer's "New Documents from the Cairo Geniza," *Homenaje a Millas-Vallierosa* (Barcelona 1954), I, 707 ff.; "The Renewal of the Controversy over the Prayer for the Head of the Community in Abraham Maimuni's Time," *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem 1958), II, 49 ff. A bunch of even more significant documents emanating from Maimonides' son and successor is being prepared for publication.

¹⁶ "New Autograph Responsa by Maimonides," *Tarbiz*, XXVIII, 2 (1959).

¹⁷ Published in four instalments in *Tarbiz*, XXIV and XXV with two others to follow. The whole material has been discussed in a paper presented to the American Academy of Jewish Research, called "R. Judah ha-

However, it was not for the sake of these and similar interesting finds that a new study of the Arabic Cairo Geniza documents was undertaken. The aim was to attack the vast material as a whole and to make it available in a suitable form to all those interested in the study of the social and economic history of the Mediterranean countries, including the trade routes to India, in the development of the Arabic language, and of course, in Jewish history. As far as the India trade is concerned, all the available documents, 275 in number,¹⁸ have been assembled, and a full edition with an English translation and commentary is nearing completion. However, the Mediterranean material, which comprises many thousands of items, mostly shorter and more fragmentary than the papers concerning the Indian trade, is still largely in an early stage of research. Therefore, all which can be said here about social and economic life in the Mediterranean countries as reflected in the Cairo Geniza documents is to be taken as an outline of preliminary results and a directive for further study.

First of all, the time with which we are concerned here, has to be defined with more precision. The Geniza chamber was located in a synagogue which originally was a Coptic church, sold to the Jewish community by the Coptic patriarch in 882.¹⁹ However, comparatively little documentary material has survived from the tenth century. The reason for this is simple, although it occurred to me only last summer, when I found and studied various documents concerning the early history of that synagogue. Around 1012, the Fatimid caliph al-Hākim ordered the destruction of the Christian and Jewish houses of worship, including the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and, as we now know positively, the synagogue under discussion also was burnt out.²⁰

Levi's biography in the Light of the Geniza Documents," Vol. 28 New York, 1959, 41-56.

¹⁸ At the time of the first report given about the subject, *Speculum*, XXIX (1954), 184, only 130 items were available. By now, it seems, everything obtainable in European and American libraries has been registered. However, the collection of Geniza material in the Public Library of Leningrad, which is not catalogued, may contain some relevant documents.

¹⁹ Cf. Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (London 1947), p. 1. It has been surmised that the building originally had been a synagogue, and was converted into a church in Byzantine times.

²⁰ The main structure of the basilica-like building

The rebuilding of the synagogue was a lengthy affair, and I venture the surmise that the Geniza chamber was added at that time. In any case, from 1015 onwards we have dated documents for almost every year and, for many years, several dated documents—I believe, for 1066, the year of the conquest of England by the Normans, about 10—and of course we are able to fix the time of countless others according to the persons mentioned in them, the script,²¹ and the subject matter. This goes on for a little over 250 years until 1266, when dated documents suddenly became rather rare. There is very little from the fourteenth century and next to nothing from the fifteenth. However, even a document made out in Cairo in 1482 resembles in paper, script, and legal formularies the deeds of the classical period of the Geniza, and Cairo still is called “Cairo which is situated near Fustāt of Egypt,” which means that in legal terminology Fustāt, the present Old Cairo, still was regarded as the capital of the country.²²

Then suddenly everything changes. Dated documents begin to appear again from the second quarter of the sixteenth century on, but then the paper obviously is not any more locally made, but European; the script is entirely different, now being Spanish-Jewish; the language, as a rule, is Hebrew and not any more Arabic, and in some cases, even Ladino, the Castilian dialect used by the Spanish Jews. In other words, the Jewish

East was completely overwhelmed by the refugees from Spain, who had to leave their country in 1492 and became prominent in the Ottoman empire shortly afterwards, just as in modern times the Jewish East became assimilated to the emigrants and refugees from Eastern and Middle Europe.

Here we are solely concerned with what has just been termed as the classical Geniza, *i. e.* documents which appear in a trickle during the second part of the tenth century and become a flood for the subsequent two and a half centuries. This means for the Muslim historian, that the Geniza is a first rate source of social and economic history for the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods and, as far as European history is concerned, for the century preceding the Crusades and for Crusader times themselves.

Naturally, most of the material found in the Geniza emanated from Jews, although there are some hundreds of pieces written in Arabic characters and originating from government chancelleries or from private persons of Muslim or Christian persuasion.²³ As the Geniza chamber was situated in Egypt, it stands to reason that its contents first of all reflect the life of the Jewry of that country. At that time Jews lived not only, and perhaps not mainly, in the cosmopolitan towns of Cairo and Alexandria or the provincial capitals, such as Damietta, which then played a great role as the Eastern Mediterranean port of Egypt, like Port Said today, or Qūṣ in Upper Egypt, which was then the terminal for the Indian trade,²⁴ but were dispersed all over the Nile delta, the Fayyum oasis and Upper Egypt. Many letters, some quite charming, and a very considerable number of legal deeds have come from these little towns of the so-called Rif, the Egyptian countryside. Much research will be required to find out whether this population was old, that is whether it represented

remained intact until it was finally pulled down in 1890. The Geniza chamber adjacent to the synagogue was not removed; however, its contents began to attract the attention of antiquities dealers and scholars in that year. See above, note 3.

²¹ The handwritings of the more prominent scribes of the rabbinical court of Fustāt (Old Cairo) are known for about 240 years (1020-1260), and the same holds true for a number of prominent personalities in various town and countries. However, utmost precaution is recommended with regard to the identification of handwritings. Definitely different persons used almost identical scripts—perhaps because they learned how to write with the same teacher. This is especially true of close relatives, as *e. g.* Maimonides and his bother David.

²² Ms. of the University Library Cambridge 13 J 4, fol. 16. The subject matter of this document is “mediæval” as well: a personality of high standing, having concluded, obviously very reluctantly, a levirate marriage with the widow of his deceased brother, regulates in this document the future relations between his two wives, especially on which occasions he was to be accompanied by which wife. Cf. also E. J. Worman, *JQR*, XVIII (1906), 10, for a document dated 1496, “introducing” Cairo as above.

²³ Mr. M. S. Stern, Fellow of All Souls College, has published a number of documents from the Fatimid chancelleries in the Geniza, *e. g.* “An Original Document from the Fatimid Chancery concerning Italian Merchants,” *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* (Rome 1956), II, 529 ff. I understand that Mr. Stern is to follow up the subject in subsequent publications.

²⁴ The merchants and their merchandise were transported on the Nile up to that town and crossed from there the desert to the East African port ‘Aydḥāb, from where ships set out to South Arabia or to India directly.

a continuation of the Jewish settlements from Roman and Byzantine times, which also were largely rural, or originated after the Muslim conquest. It should be noted in this connection that there exist some old deeds (old here means the late tenth and early eleventh centuries) coming from such little places, written in Hebrew, not Arabic, and containing Greek names and Greek legal terminology.²⁵

On the other hand, one has to bear in mind that the eleventh and twelfth centuries were turbulent times and Egypt was flooded with refugees from Palestine and Syria, which were in a state of complete dissolution even during the century preceding the Crusades, as well as from Byzantine and Western Europe territories. We positively know from the Geniza that the communal authorities in Old Cairo and Alexandria sent these refugees on to the little towns and villages. Therefore, when we find there so many people referred to as Shāmī (Syro-Palestinian), Rūmī (Byzantine), Franjī (French), Ashkenāzī (German),²⁶ we have to understand that these constituted recent additions to the local population, and very often this is clearly evident from the content of the documents concerned.

However, the Jewish population of Egypt as a whole, of course, with the exception of Hellenistic times, which produced Philo of Alexandria and a number of other illustrious men, never played a major role in Jewish history, such as did those of Babylonia-Iraq on the one hand and Spain on the other and those of some other European countries in later centuries. Egypt remained basically a country of transit and exchange. The most important Egyptian Jew—and indeed the greatest Jew of the High Middle Ages—no doubt was Moses

Maimonides. However, he was born in 1135 in Cordova in Spain and came to Egypt at the age of thirty-two, when he was already a famous man, and he always referred to himself as an Andalusian or a Ma'aravi, a person from the Muslim West. His contemporary and colleague, the Chief Justice of the Jewish community of Alexandria, was called Anatoli, French Anatole; he came from Marseilles and we know in fact that he was insulted by a local dignitary, who referred to his inferior, *i.e.* European, origin.²⁷ Egypt had obtained ecumenical importance for Judaism long before Maimonides, however not through its own resources, but through the influx of prominent scholars and communal leaders, either from Babylonia-Iraq or from the Palestinian Academy, which, having left Jerusalem in 1070 for Tyre and later on Damascus, finally settled in Old Cairo in 1127.

Thus it is not surprising that the Cairo Geniza reflects not so much the Egyptian local, as the Mediterranean scene in general. I purposely use the term Mediterranean, because from the countries east of Palestine and Syria, the great Jewish centers of Iraq and Persia, very few private letters and deeds have reached the Geniza. Countless people from Iraq and Persia *settled* in Egypt, as we may learn from their family names, which range from Samarkand in Central Asia and Nisābūr in Northeast Persia to those of smaller towns in Persia and Iraq, such as Kāzārūn, 'Ukbara and Hīt. Sometimes we are able to conclude from the mistakes in Arabic made by persons bearing Persian family names that they had arrived only recently in the country.²⁸ But documentary mate-

²⁵ To be sure, Greek terminology was not uncommon in the Jewish courts under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Academy right to the end of the eleventh century. Thus, the word *akolytos* (ἀκολύτως), "unhindered," *i.e.* ratified, concludes a marriage contract not only in Mastaura, Asia Minor, in 1022 [Cf. Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Athens, 1939), p. 189], but also in Ramle, Palestine, in 1052 [See S. Assaf, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem 1953), p. 105], as well as in the small town Damsis in the Nile Delta in 1083 [S. Assaf, *The Formulary of Hai Gaon* (Jerusalem 1930), p. 58]. In addition to such terms, however, which had a rather wide diffusion, there appear in ancient Geniza documents others which are quite uncommon and which might represent some local usage.

²⁶ The two latter terms designate also persons coming from Western Europe in general.

²⁷ When one compares a legal opinion written by Anatoli—as that printed in *Abraham Maimuni Responsa* (Jerusalem 1937), pp. 167-170—with those composed by his contemporaries and colleagues Moses and Abraham Maimonides, one is indeed struck by the contrast between a man who had not studied with the Greek and those who did. This contrast between Spanish and Oriental Jews, who were imbued, in addition to their religious learning, with secular culture, and the "Ashkenazim" or European Jews, who confined themselves to religious education, continued right down to the seventeenth century. As late an author as David Conforte, born in Salonica, 1618, writes: "All Ashkenazim are by nature inarticulate in speech, stammerers and stutterers; they are unable to speak properly and to bring forth in writing the thoughts resting in their hearts." Cf. M. Kosover in *Homenaje Millas-Vallicrosa* (Barcelona 1954), I, 754.

²⁸ They mix up masculine and feminine, make an

rial from Iraq and Persia is very rare, far rarer *e. g.* than that from the trade route to India, which via East Africa and South Arabia was frequented by Egyptian merchants.

How is this to be explained? It would be rash to attribute this scarcity of material from the East to the political situation, *i. e.* to the fact that Egypt was ruled by the Fatimid caliphs, while Iraq and Persia were under the sway of their adversaries, the Seldjuks, who paid homage to the Abbasid caliphs. For we have in the Geniza a lot of *official* Jewish correspondence from Iraq, mainly from the presidents of the Jewish academies there, but also from the Resh-Galutha, the political head of the Diaspora. Strangely enough, the Nagid, the political head of the Jews in Fatimid Egypt, got his letter of installation from the Resh-Galutha in Seldjuk Baghdad. Therefore, there must be another reason for the rarity of private documentary Geniza papers from the East. The most feasible explanation is perhaps that in those days, as in our own times, there was very little trade between Iraq and Persia on the one hand and Egypt on the other, and where there is no business, there is no correspondence.

There might have been in operation, however, an additional and quite accidental circumstance. The Geniza chamber formed a part of the so-called synagogue of the Palestinians, *i. e.* where prayers were said according to the traditions followed in Palestine, where ministers were appointed and officers confirmed by the Head of the Academy of Jerusalem, and where, naturally, people connected with Palestine and Syria prevailed. It stands to reason, that some arrangement for a Geniza had been made also in the other main synagogue of Fustât, that of the Babylonians. Had that Geniza been preserved, perhaps we would have had more letters and deeds coming from Iraq and Persia.

Turning now to the Mediterranean proper, we find that, in addition to Egypt itself and Palestine and Syria, by far most of the material is provided by Tunisia and Sicily. This again may have had its cause in the conditions of commerce at that time. The products of India and the Far East, as well as those of Egypt itself, were brought to Tunisia and Sicily and exchanged there for the

goods of Muslim Spain and western North Africa as well as for those of Christian Europe. There might have been however, an additional circumstance, similar to that just mentioned. Shortly after the churches and synagogues in the Fatimid empire had been destroyed, permission was given to rebuild them. However, as we know from a number of Geniza papers as well as from Christian sources, the afflicted communities incurred great difficulties in raising the funds needed for reconstruction. In this time of hardship, the leaders of the Palestinian synagogue hit upon an expedient often adopted also by modern community leaders: they admitted the Maghribis, by which mainly the Tunisian merchants were meant, to public offices and showered upon them honorific titles, confirmed in bombastic letters sent from the seat of the Academy in Jerusalem. As we know from a Geniza document, the strategem was successful and the Maghribis joined the Palestinian synagogue; therefore it is perhaps not surprising that so many documents from Tunisia and Sicily, which culturally was at that time only an appendage to Tunisia, should have been found in the Geniza; cf. the present writer's "Eleventh Century Tunisia in the Light of the Cairo Geniza Documents," *Mémorial E. Levy-Provençal*, Paris 1960.

It would be erroneous to assume that only letters addressed to Old Cairo and deeds made out there have been preserved. We have letters sent from one town in Spain to another, from Spain to Morocco, from Sicily to Tunisia, and even one sent from Jerusalem to Toledo in Spain. Even from Christian Byzantium a very considerable number of documents has come to light. We have letters from Southern France. The ships and the merchants of the Italian city republics of Genoa, Pisa, Gaeta, and Venice are occasionally mentioned; as however, with the exception of Venice, no considerable Jewish communities lived in those towns at that time, no documents coming from there have been found so far. Scholars called *Bunduqî*, which certainly means Venetian,²⁹ were found in Old Cairo as early as the eleventh century.

Thus, the Geniza documents provide informa-

incorrect use of the article, and are unsure concerning certain typically Semitic sounds—in short, they have difficulties similar to those incurred by American students studying Arabic.

²⁹ The word could mean "trader in hazelnuts." However, as similar derivations, such as *fustuqî*, "trader in pistachios," have not been found in the Geniza papers, and as the translation "cross-bow maker" is ruled out for so early a time, *bunduqî* must mean "Venetian."

tion concerning many countries during a considerable span of time, and it is natural that there should be differences between the various places and periods. However, as far as Egypt and the adjacent countries are concerned, a rather consistent picture of a society with very definite features emerges. This picture is not entirely complete. One layer of the society, the upper high class, the very rich Jews, who were connected with the government, is only sparsely represented. The reason for this is simple: they did not live in Fustāt. They had their residence in the fashionable suburb and seat of government, Cairo, where they had a synagogue and court of justice of their own. There are many references to this state of affairs in the Geniza papers. A sister, writing a letter from the capital to her brother with all the latest gossip, reports that a high official was fired from his post and was asked to leave Cairo immediately and take up his domicile in Fustāt. This was an easy matter, since rich Jews had houses in both places. Thus an India traveller, recommending to his brother in Fustāt two distinguished Tunisian merchants whom he had met in the East, asks him to put them up—but, in his house in Cairo. Mevorakh, the head of the Egyptian Jews for over thirty years (ca. 1080-1110), lived in Cairo, but took temporary residence during the month of Tishri, the month of the High Holidays, in Fustāt, when he also used to settle public affairs in consultation with the leaders of the community. The many petitions to him found in the Geniza certainly were submitted to him on the occasion of such visits. On the other hand, Maimonides, who was not very rich (after all, he was a refugee from Spain and, in addition, had lost his money when his brother perished in the Indian Ocean), lived in Fustāt, and, as he was a court physician, had to ride every day two and a half miles from his house to the Sultan's palace. His son and successor Abraham also was a court physician and, like his father, stayed in Fustāt. This we know from a little note³⁰ asking him when he would come and spend a weekend in Cairo. In short, we have to make allowance for the fact that the life of the upper stratum of the society is reflected only very imperfectly in the Geniza papers.³¹

We are compensated for this loss by the richness and enormous variety of material concerning the middle and lower classes. The society which left us the Geniza documents is entirely different from that of the Jewish communities in Europe at the same time. Owing to a murderous legislation of economic discrimination, the Jews in Europe were confined to a small number of precarious occupations. In the Islamic East, no such discriminatory laws were in existence. In addition, Jews had lived in the countries concerned from time immemorial. Therefore, the distribution of occupations was far more normal, with persons engaged in manual work most probably forming the majority of the population.

Even agriculture and animal husbandry are by no means absent from the Geniza. The main protein food during the weekdays was cheese; on Saturdays one had chicken or meat. Therefore, the Geniza papers refer to this product as frequently as do the Arabic papyri of the eighth and ninth centuries. Cheese had to be religiously "pure" or "permissible" (Hebrew *tāhōr* and Arabic *ḥalāl*; the term "kosher" was used in Sicily, from where much cheese was imported, as from Palestine). Therefore, special precaution had to be taken in its preparation, about which we read with regard to various parts of the country. The Jewish sheepbreeders had the same difficulties with the milking of the animals on Saturdays that the religious Kibbutzim have in Israel today. Beekeeping, with its products of honey and wax being of equal importance, was another familiar occupation, perhaps brought with them by the ancient immigrants from Palestine, although it was indigenous also in Egypt. Even Jews of modest income possessed fields where wheat was grown, and the trade in wheat looms very large in the Geniza papers; however, how far they were actively engaged in this branch of farming is not yet discernible from the documents studied. On the other hand, the processing of flax, the second staple crop of Egypt at that time, and its making into linen are frequently referred to in the Geniza as Jewish occupations.

ing the uppermost stratum of the Jewish society, about which we know both from literary sources and, mostly, from petitions addressed to its representatives, found in the Geniza. As they were close to the Court, they most likely used Arabic and not Hebrew letters in their communications and perhaps also applied to government rather than to Jewish courts with their lawsuits.

³⁰ MS. University Library Cambridge, T.-S. N. S. 94 J 59.

³¹ In addition to the reason given, there might have been another cause for the scarcity of material concern-

This brings us to the most important field of manual occupations, industry, arts, and crafts. It is easy to compile a long list of different branches of manual work referred to in the Geniza. However, their relative importance will be found out, if ever, only after much additional research. At present, it seems that the Geniza mostly refers to the textile industry, the spinning, weaving, and dyeing of silk, linen, cotton, and wool, and above all to dyeing; in the second place, to copper- and silversmiths; of almost equal importance were the glass industry and the production of sugar, which is as frequently mentioned as that of honey. Of the many minor crafts referred to in the Geniza, I would like to mention that of the *muzawwiq*, or painter of murals. We are here in early Fatimid times, when this art, as we know from the magnificent paintings in the Cappella Palatina of Palermo, was still in vogue.

As in Roman times, there was no clear-cut division between industry and commerce. A man who produced a commodity also traded in it. Naturally by far most of the Geniza documents are concerned with commerce. A systematic perusal of them will greatly enlarge our knowledge of the history of enterprise, the enormous variety of goods handled, the routes of trade, the methods and morals of business, and its legal basis. In general, one is favourably impressed by the sound organization, the subtle technique, and the high moral standard of business at that time. In particular, one is moved by a certain detachment towards worldly possessions. Everybody, of course, wanted to make money. However, one was not too much depressed, when one suffered losses. *Al-ʿaqiba ʾila ʾl-ḥair* "At the end, everything will turn to the good."

Business could flourish only if it was protected by law. Law was mainly personal, not territorial, and the religious minorities were juridically autonomous to a large extent. There was a great difference between Muslim and Jewish legal organization. The Muslim kadi was a government officer who acted as a judge alone. The Jewish court consisted at least of three members, who did their job, with the exception of the professional member, who served also as scribe, without remuneration as a service to the community. As people were busy, one had to have a large number of persons qualified to act as judges. This explains the wide extent of religious learning among the Jews and the spirit of common sense and expe-

diency prevailing in the legal decisions. All these judges were seasoned businessmen, and naturally sometimes had to go to court themselves. It is therefore not surprising to find a man on one page of a record book as a judge and on the next as a litigant. Cases were settled mostly not according to the rigorous religious law, but by agreements based on usage.³²

On the other hand, family life still was regulated by the religious law. Therefore, we find for example such an ancient institution as the levirate marriage still in force (a man, even when married, was obliged to marry the widow of his brother, in case the latter had no male offspring). Indeed, the extremely rare cases of polygamy we find in the Geniza are due mainly to this law. As a rule, the marriage contract contained the condition that the husband was not allowed to marry a second wife, and even where the contract was not available, the courts saw to it that "the usual condition," as it was called, was adhered to. The society of the Geniza papers was not a man's world. Women very frequently appear as parties to a deed and as writers or receivers of letters. Much is to be learned from them about the relations between husband and wife, between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and in the so-called extended family. It is perhaps too early to draw general conclusions. Family attachment was very strong, but it was expressed not so much by tenderness between husband and wife, as by mutual devotion of parents and children, and brothers and sisters.

In addition to the subjects mentioned, there are a great number of other aspects of social life in the Mediterranean countries which are illustrated by the Cairo Geniza documents, such as material civilization (housing, clothing and food, prices and standards of living), daily life, weekends and holidays, travel by land and by sea, illness and doctors, death and burial, social etiquette, and social ideals. Much is to be learned about the community, its officers, and the social services, such as the provision for the poor, widows, orphans, invalids, captives and foreigners; about interfaith relations; about the government, its institutions, and their influence on the life of the individual.

³² The usage of the merchants or other professions was sometimes fixed in writing in the form of a testimony deposited in court. Such a testimony is contained, *e. g.* in No. 196 of the book on the India trade referred to above note 18.

Finally, we learn a lot about the spirit of the age. Religion was of course paramount; however, its actual meaning for the average man still has to be defined; a strong group-consciousness was paired with an outspoken individualism; one lived in a glorious past, which formed an unquestioned model, and in anticipation of future, and perhaps imminent, physical and spiritual redemption. The ideal of everybody, even the businessman, was to be a learned man, and poetry fulfilled an important social function completely different from that in our own times.

The present writer hopes to publish, in the not too distant future, a representative selection of Geniza papers, illustrative of Mediterranean society in mediaeval times. By this and similar publications³³ some indirect service will be done

also for another branch of mediaeval research: Arabic papyrology, which, so far, has occupied itself comparatively little with the material contemporary to the Geniza documents.³⁴ Thus, it is to be hoped, the joint efforts of Geniza research and Arabic papyrology will compensate for the lack of archives in Muslim countries indicated in the opening passage of this article.

³³ In addition to the studies referred to above, note 11 and note 18, mention should be made of the edition of the magnificent collection of deeds and documents T.-S. 18 J of the University Library Cambridge now in preparation by Dr. N. N. Golb of Cincinnati.

³⁴ Cf. A. Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo 1952); *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde* (Prague 1955). Albert Dietrich, "Die arabischen Urkunden," in *Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der juristischen Papyrusforschung* (Stuttgart 1957).

URARTIANS AND HURRIANS

WARREN C. BENEDICT

THE VIEW IS NOW widely held that the Urartian state, which controlled the area centered on Lake Van from about 850 B. C., represented a reconsolidation of a fragment of the Hurrian states, which had been broken up in the late fourteenth century B. C.¹ This interpretation is most clearly stated by A. Goetze, e. g.:

¹ A. Goetze, *HCA—Hethiter, Churriter und Assyrer*, Institut für Sammenlignende Kulturforskning, Serie A: Forelesninger XVII (Oslo, 1936), pp. 102-104, 172-175, esp. 174; A. Goetze, *Kleinasien*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft III, 1, 3, 3, 1, 2d Ed. (München, 1957), 190-91; H. A. Rigg, Jr., *The Kingdom of Van (Urartu), its origins in relation to the Hurrian problem* (Harvard Univ. Diss., 1936, unp.), pp. 155-204. I quote from the works of Goetze because his statements are fuller and clearer than those of other writers. Many authors state that the Hurrian area of occupation reached to Lake Van, or even that they originated in that area, but are noncommittal about the origin of the Urartians. See, e. g., N. Adontz, *Histoire d'Arménie* (1946), p. 26, cf. pp. 272-73; K. Bittel, *Grundzüge der Vor- und Frühgeschichte Kleinasien* (1950), pp. 78-81, esp. 79; Louis Delaporte, *Les peuples de l'Orient Méditerranéen I: Le Proche-Orient Asiatique* (1948), 237; P. Jouguet (Ed.), *Les Premières Civilisations* (1950),

Aus einer Zusammenfassung der vielen Nairi-Länder entsteht zu Beginn des I. Jahrtausends das urartäische Reich, das seinen Mittelpunkt in Tušpa—d. i. das heutige Van—hat. Ich sehe im urartäischen Reich eine Erneuerung alter politischer Traditionen, die sich bis in die Zeit der höchsten Blüte der Hurriter zurückführen lassen, und finde in diesem Zusammenhang ein weiteres Argument für die These, dass das Vansee-Gebiet altes Hurriter-Gebiet ist.²

The opposite view—that the Urartian state was founded by people newly arrived in the area—is specifically denied by Goetze:

Es scheint wichtig zu betonen dass so die Überlie-

p. 352; A. Moortgat in Scharff and Moortgat, *Ägypten und Vorderasien im Altertum* (1950), p. 432; I. M. D'iakonov, *Istoriia Midii* (1956), pp. 98-99. Hrozný apparently at one time leaned toward this view (*Massis*, 9 [1937], 12), but in his *Ancient History of Western Asia, India and Crete* (n. d.), p. 110 he seems to consider the Urartians later arrivals.

² *HCA* 104. Essentially the same view is expressed in *Kleinasien* 191, though not as explicitly as in *HCA*. More succinctly, in *HCA* 174 he refers to Urartu as "entstanden aus einem neuen Zusammenschluss der hurritischen Länder."



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The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area as Reflected in the Records of the Cairo Geniza

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THE MAIN INDUSTRIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AS REFLECTED IN THE RECORDS OF THE CAIRO GENIZA

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

While scanning the Geniza records ¹⁾ for the arts and crafts mentioned in them, the modern observer is impressed by the great number of occupations and by the high degree of specialization and division of labor apparent in them. Although industrial plants were absent, or at least rare—some of the sugar and paper factories might have come near to the modern type—industry itself was divided up into highly specialized branches. Thus far, the present writer has counted two hundred and ten different arts and crafts—with which the one hundred and fifty or so professional corporations traced in ancient Rome by

1) Bibliographical note. About the Cairo Geniza documents in general cf. S. D. Goitein, *L'état actuel de la Recherche sur les documents de la Geniza du Caire*, *Revue des Études Juives*, I (CXVIII), 1960, pp. 9-27. Id., *The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History*, *JAOS* 80, 1960, pp. 91-100.

The manuscripts are quoted according to the towns and collections, in which they are preserved, and the signs used by the latter. Note the following abbreviations: T.-S.: Taylor-Schechter Collection, preserved in the University Library, Cambridge, England.

ULCambridge: Other collections of Geniza papers in the same library.

Oxford: Bodleian Library, Oxford, ms. Heb.

MJ: Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, Oxford 1920-22.

MT: Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies* I, Cincinnati 1931.

India Book: A collection of Geniza documents on the India trade, prepared by the present writer for publication.

Med. Soc.: *Mediterranean Society in the High Middle Ages, based on Records from the Cairo Geniza*, a volume in preparation by the present writer. The article printed above corresponds to Section 4 of Chapter II of this book.

N: Geniza records connected with Nahray ben Nissim, a Qayrawanese merchant, scholar and public figure, who emigrated to Egypt and Palestine and lived in those countries between 1048 and 1098. Prepared for publication by Mr. M. Michael.

Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*: R. B. Serjeant, *Material for a History of Islamic Textiles up to the Mongol Conquest*, publ. in *Ars Islamica* vols. IX-XV/XVI.

J. T. Waltzing in his monumental *Corporations professionnelles* might be compared. A considerable number of the approximately one hundred and twenty other occupations listed by the present writer also entailed, at least partly, manual work. This total of about three hundred and thirty occupations tallies with the two hundred seventy eight corporations de métier noted by André Raymond for Cairo in 1801. There are, of course, many differences in the details ¹).

Division of labor is evident not only in the great industries of textiles, dyeing, and clothing; metals, glass and pottery; building, food, and transport, as shown below, but also in the fact that we find so many craftsmen specializing in smaller branches. The following examples may serve as illustrations: makers of kohl (collyrium)-sticks, of writing-cases (in which the scribes kept pen and ink attached to their belts), mirrors, fans, spindles, sieves, combs (for hair and for flax), manufacturers and stringers of beads, perforators of pearls, persons processing corals, or making ordinary or braided mats ²). A *kohl*-stick (with which the black eyelid powder is applied) is a very small and trifle object. However, when we read in various marriage contracts that among the bride's trousseau such sticks are listed as valuable items, being made from all kinds of material, such as crystal,

1) J. P. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains*, Louvain, vol. 4 (1900), pp. 1-49, quoted by J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, p. 306, Chapter VII, Note 20. To be sure, the Roman corporations included traders as well as craftsmen. The same holds true of the list published by André Raymond, *Une liste des Corporations de métiers au Caire en 1801*, *Arabica* 4 (1957), pp. 150-162. Cf. L. Massignon, *Cahiers Internat. de Sociologie* 1953, 33-52.

2) Makers of *kohl*-sticks: *milī* (T.-S. N.S. 94 J 27 III, No. 4, l. 4, buys half of a house in 1143); writing-cases: *dawātī* (T.-S. 10 J 9, f. 9 [N 73], l. 4, Ben al-Dawātī, a merchant); mirrors: *mir'ātī* (Brit. Mus. Or. 5566 c, f. 9, publ. J. Braslavsky, *Our Country*, p. 80, Note 13); fans: *marāwīḥī* (T.-S. Box K 15, f. 43, in a list of names, it seems, of contributors; ULC Or 1080 J 46 collector of contributions for the poor); spindles: *maghāzīlī*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 48, IV, ll. 8-9 (list of poor); f. 85, II, list of receivers of clothing; Box K 25, f. 169, l. 12 (payers of rent in a public building etc.; sieves: *gharābīliyya* (Oxford c 28, f. 61 [N 190] verso, l. 12 and T.-S. 8 J 25 f. 6 [N 160], l. 8); combs: *amshāfī* (extremely common); beads: *kharazī* (very common); stringer of beads: *naẓẓām* (T.-S. 13 J 25 f. 19 [N 181], l. 15); perforator of pearls: *thaqqāb al-lūlū* (T.-S. Box K 15, f. 14 and 66 B; K 15, f. 93); corals: *marjānī* (very common); mats: *ḥuṣrī*, *alladhī ya'mal al-ḥuṣar* (T.-S. 20.175, l. 6 and verso, l. 7); cf. Ma'ālim al-Qurba, ed. Reuben Levy, Cambridge, 1938, Chapters 58, 60, 62 and 66.

gold or silver, we understand that a man could well make a living by specializing in their production. In every household, one or several women devoted a part of their time to spinning; thus the demand for spindles must have been large enough to encourage people to concentrate on making them. Beads and corals were commodities looming large in the Mediterranean, as well as in the Indian trade, and, naturally, they needed processing, before being shipped. Mats, of course, were found in every private home and public building; they are mentioned very often in letters, as ordered, or sent as a present from Alexandria to Old Cairo, or from Aden, South Arabia, to India. A matmaker could be an expert, carefully chosen for his task, and there is a letter where a mat was ordered to measure¹).

It is odd to find a man designated as a "sawduster". However, since we know that sawdust was used, instead of sand, to dry a freshly written page, and as this material has been actually found between the leaves of ancient Arabic manuscripts from Spain, there were obviously persons who specialized in the collecting, handling, and selling of sawdust²). Since cushions and pillows represented a prominent part of the equipment of a Mediterranean home, it is natural that "downers", the processors and sellers of down, formed a profession by themselves³).

In many cases, however, we read about an object made, but not how the profession of its maker was called. Thus, the present writer has listed over thirty different types of containers in which goods were shipped, but only for one, the wicker work baskets, the designation for their manufacturer has been found in a Geniza record—and this for the island of Jerba off the Tunisian coast⁴). However, from the evidence preserved, we may safely conclude that almost each one was manufactured by a different type of craftsman, and that, in general, the actual number of manual occupations represented in the Geniza

1) Details in *Mediterranean Society*, Chapter VIII.

2) "Sawduster": *nushārī*. The son of such a man was the proprietor of a ship. Brit. Mus. Or 5542 f. 9 [N 67]. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément* II, p. 671b.

3) "Downer": *ṣaghghāb*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 66, verso I.

4) '*Allūsh al-jarbī al-qaffāṣ ben Nissīm*, T.-S. 20.4 (Around 1046).

papers was a multiple of the two hundred and ten listed so far¹).

In some cases, the occupations mentioned were dominated by Muslims or Christians²). In general, however, the reference is to Jews, and, here, one has to bear in mind that religious and ethnic communities used to specialize in certain professions, just as this was the case with families and clans. The present writer vividly recalls a visit to a large factory for tourists' souvenirs in Damascus in 1924, where the local Christians did the woodwork, the Armenians, objects from mother-of-pearl, while the Jews were the copper- and silver-smiths. A similar denominational and ethnic division of labor was in operation in Geniza times. The Jews were prominent in the textile industry and, above all, in silk, as well as in dyeing, which was almost a Jewish profession in all countries and in which they were thought to have professional secrets³). The production of glass was another favorite Jewish occupation and so was metalwork of all descriptions, but mainly silver-smithery. Finally, many Jews were engaged in the food industry, while pharmaceuticals, which was even more closely connected with medicine than it is today, was to a large extent Jewish.

However, it is most characteristic of our period, which was comparatively free of caste-like separation and restrictions, that religious and ethnic occupational divisions were by no means rigid. We find Muslim silkworkers, dyers, tanners, glassmakers or pharmacists alongside with their Jewish fellow workers, even Muslim scholars, either coming from families engaged in these occupations or working at them in person⁴). The handbooks of market supervision, whether from Spain

1) The same would be the case with the names of professions culled from the Muslim books on market supervision, biography, geography and history.

2) E.g., *rā'id*, horse trainer, cf. *Med. Soc.*, Chapter IX, § 9, *maṭārīdī*, maker of hunting spears, 13 J 28, f. 9 [N 126], ll. 6 and 11; *rammāh*, maker of lances, Mosseri L 130 [N 220] l. 12. Cf. p. 187, note 5.

3) Al-Jāhīz, *Al-Tabaṣṣur fi 'l-Tijāra* (Handbook of Commerce), Damascus, 1932, p. 339, says that the best crimson was found in Spain and that only a certain group of Jews knew how to find it, cf. Serjeant, *Muslim Textiles* XV-XVI, pp. 35 and 70.

4) This will be shown in the forthcoming Ph.D. thesis of Mr. Hayyim Cohen on the occupations of Muslim religious scholars down to the period of the Crusaders. Cf. also C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Index, under *Ḥarīrī*, *Dabbāg*, *Ṣabbāg*, *Zajjāj* and *ʿAṭṭār*.

or from the East, do not indicate that any occupation was confined to a certain community. Accordingly, the Geniza shows us Jews in practically every way of life, from vizier down to blacksmith and sailor. However, their preponderance in certain occupations, as pointed out above, was a fact. Therefore, the sketch of the main industries reflected in the Geniza records following here is to be taken as a cross section, rather than as a complete picture of the immensely rich gamut of Mediterranean arts and crafts practiced during the High Middle Ages.

(a) *Textiles and Dyeing*

Comparable to the place of steel and other metals in modern economy, textiles represented the major industry of mediaeval times in the Mediterranean area. As far as the statistical data available allow us to gauge, a very great proportion, perhaps the majority, of the working population and certainly of the distributing classes was engaged in this branch of economy. Textiles in those times were more durable and more expensive than they are nowadays and they seem to have been more variegated in fabric, color and provenience than ours. Fantastic prices were paid for single selected pieces, the so-called *a'lāq*; this we know not only from literary sources, which may be suspected of exaggeration, but also from business letters found in the Geniza. Clothing formed part—sometimes a considerable part—of a family's investment, being transmitted from parents to children, to be converted into cash in case of an emergency. The furniture of a house consisted mostly of various types of carpets, couches, cushions, canopies and draperies—objects produced mainly by the textile industry. All this explains why the latter was of such paramount importance¹).

The general terms for spinner and weaver are not common in the Geniza¹). Normally, a man is designated by a word referring to the

1) Details in Chapters III and VIII of *Med. Soc.*

2) Spinner, *ghazẓāl* (Budapest, David Kaufmann Coll. XV, a merchant, Aleppo, Syria, around 1040; T.-S. 13 J 9, f. 5 and 13 J 29, f. 2, a merchant in Zawilat al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, 1047). Weaver, *ḥā'ik* (T.-S. Box K 15, no. 70 I, l. 2, misread in M J II 247, Note 2). About a partnership in weaving, cf. *Med. Soc.*, Ch. II.

special branch of industry in which he was active, such as silk, linen or wool, or some more closely defined textile. It is to these that we turn now our attention.

It is appropriate to open our survey with the silk industry, for this material, "which combines strength with lightness, durability with beauty and cleanliness with luster"¹), was favored in our period above all others. Silk was produced all around the Mediterranean, even in countries where climatic conditions were not favorable to sericulture, such as Egypt. Still more impressive is the ubiquity of the industry itself. Silk was woven and dyed even in the small towns of the Egyptian Rif ("countryside"). This is known to us from business letters referring to raw silk which was sent to such places, or was bought there from itinerant merchants, as well as from contracts of tax farming concerned with the licenses for silkweaving and silkdyeing in small towns. There are repeated references to silkworkers in al-Maḥalla²). Women, too, were engaged everywhere in the unraveling and reeling, as well as in the weaving and dyeing of silk.

The leading country in the production of silk in our period, at least as far as the Geniza records go, was Spain³). It exported cocoons and raw silk, as well as finished products. The origin of this prominence is perhaps to be sought in the fact that in early Islamic times Spain was chiefly colonized by people coming from Syria and Lebanon, countries with an ancient sericulture. Second to Spain was Sicily. Some Byzantinists still seem to believe that the silkworm and the industry connected with it were brought to Sicily by the Normans, when they

1) W. F. Leggett, *The Story of Silk*, New York, 1949, p. 1. For bibliographical data about silk in our period, cf. R. S. Lopez, *China Silk in Europe in the Yuan Period*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 72 (1952), p. 73, Note 3, and the latter's *Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire*, *Speculum* 20 (1945), 1-42.

2) E.g. Shaṭṭanauf, Benhā, Minyat Zifta and Qalyūb in 1141 A.D. T.-S. 20.80; "outside Sammanūd" in 1162, T.-S. 8 J 32, f. 3. Tax farming on weaving and dyeing of silk in Ibwān, 1106 A.D.; ms. Oxford d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 8; in Qalyūb, Oxford c 28 (Catal. 2876), f. 69, 1155 A.D. The *ḥarīr* of al-Maḥalla: 8 J 5, f. 18 c (1157); 8 J 32, f. 3, and Maimonides, *Responsa*, Jerusalem 1934, p. 243.

3) E.g., Oxford e 98, f. 64 b, ll. 7-13; d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 52; 13 J 22, f. 30, l. 6 and very frequent in N. For literary sources, cf. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane* III, Paris, 1953, p. 233 ff.

sacked the flourishing cities of Greece in 1147 and forcefully settled its skilled laborers, male and female, in their own kingdom. However, over a hundred years ago, Michele Amari expressed his conviction that the silk industry of Sicily must have been far older—a conviction vindicated by abundant testimony from the Cairo Geniza. Throughout the whole of the eleventh century we find both raw silk, called Sicilian, and silk fabrics leaving the shores of the island, either from its western points, Palermo and Mazara, or at Syracuse in the East ¹). In addition to the usual filaments, Sicily produced, on the one hand, a very high priced variety, and on the other a cheaper sort, called *lāsin*, a term extremely frequent in the Geniza records, but, it seems, not yet found anywhere else ²).

Tunisia, too, was a great exporter of silk and appears as such in almost every business letter sent from or to this country. Since, however, in all these letters, as far as the present writer is able to see, no variety of silk is called by the name of the country or one of its towns, as is the case with regard to Spain and Sicily, one is inclined to believe that references throughout are to re-export and, in some cases, this is expressly stated. To be sure, the flourishing textile industry of Tunisia processed Spanish and other silk, just as it did with Egyptian linen or Sicilian cotton.

It is amazing how little we hear in the Geniza about silk from Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. As is well known, silk was an important article of export from the Crusader states of the Levante, and Damascus was world famous for its silk products (hence English *damask*) ³).

1) E.g., T.-S. 20.69, l. 6 (Sicilian raw silk sold in al-Qayrawān); T.-S. 12.367, l. 18 (same in Alexandria); T.-S. 20.122 (sent from Palermo and from Mazara); UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 22 (sent from Palermo to Damsis in Egypt). Frequent in N.

For the Norman deportation of the Jews and the silk workers from Greece to Sicily, cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* XV-XVI, p. 56 (where for 441/1149-541/1147 is to be read). Cf. also Amari-Nallino, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 1933, vol. 3, p. 441.

2) About the prices of silk and *lāsin*, cf. *Med. Soc.*, Chapter III.

3) Cf. W. Heyd, *Commerce du Levant* I, p. 178 (and cf. ib., Notes 6 and 7) and 171 (cf. ib., Note 2). The European word *damask* has nothing to do with pre-Islamic Arabic *dimaqs*, which is derived from Greek *metaxa* (as believed by some scholars). For this word was not used by the Arabs at the time of their contacts with merchants from Western Europe.

Naturally, the Geniza records are not entirely reticent about Syro-Palestinian silk and silk products, but these occasional references dwindle to insignificance, if compared with the broad and steady flow of information about the import of these materials from the West ¹). It was perhaps the devastation of Syria and Palestine during the eleventh century, so frequently referred to in our sources, which is to be blamed for this state of affairs, while, after the advent of the Crusaders, Europe most probably constituted a more profitable market for Syrian silk than Egypt.

The products of the renowned Byzantine silk industry, in particular its brocade, its *mandils* and the materials used for upholstery, were very much in demand in other Mediterranean countries ²). It is, however, most remarkable that in the Geniza records we do not find a single instance of Byzantine *raw* silk used outside the frontiers of the empire. This cannot be mere chance. Rather, it reflects an imperial policy, which restricted the export trade to finished products, as, indeed, is expressly stated in the "Book of the Prefect", Chapter VI, para. 16: "The raw-silk dealers are not to sell silk to Jews or to [other] merchants for resale outside the city" ³).

On the other hand, we learn that even Iraqi raw silk was traded in Alexandria, which served as the exchange center of this material for the whole of Egypt ⁴). Iraq also had a silk industry of its own. In this respect, however, it was by far surpassed by its eastern neighbor, Iran. Despite its geographical remoteness, Iran was one of the main, if not

1) E.g., T.-S. 13 J 19, f. 27 [N 14], l. 8 (when once no silk fabrics arrived in Old Cairo from the West, some supply from Syria kept the price down); Box K 15, f. 99 III (a blue Damascene silk robe pawned); 13 J 22, f. 10, l. 9 (red and black silk fabrics ordered in Ramle from another place in Palestine).

2) Cf. *Med. Soc.*, Chapter I.

3) R. S. Lopez and I. W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, New York 1955, p. 22. The "Book of the Prefect" was promulgated in 911 or 912. As we see here, at least some of its regulations must have been observed in the subsequent centuries as well. One document, dated 1157, speaks about Rūmī silk in al-Maḥalla: T.-S. 8 J 5 f. 18. However, as it is mentioned together with *lāsin*, I take it as referring to Christian Sicily. For Byzantine Jewish silk weavers living in Egypt, see T.-S. 8 J 4, f. 15a and UL Cambridge 1081 J 9.

4) T.-S. N.S. 94 J 58, f. 3. ("Iraqian raw silk is much in demand"). Iraqi *lāsin* in T.-S. 8 J 5, f. 18, cf. the preceding Note, differentiated from the Rūm *lāsin*.

the main, supplier of high priced silk fabrics for the Mediterranean countries during this period. Of first rank in this respect was Tabaristan, the same district south of the Caspian Sea, which, in later centuries, was the main source of imported silk goods for most of Europe also. Other important centers of the silk industry were South-western Iran, from which the *Tustarī*, *Qurqūbī* and many other popular silk fabrics came, and Khorāsān in far north-eastern Persia with its *Ibrīsim* and other specialities ¹).

“Local”, i.e. Egyptian silk was of an inferior quality, its price being between one quarter and one third of the average. Since a mother writing from Alexandria asks her son in Old Cairo to procure her some, it must have been grown in the south, most probably in the Fayyūm, to which province five hundred Syrians were credited with having transplanted the cultivation of mulberry trees and the raising of silk worms. One of the fraudulent practices of Egyptian weavers was to mingle “local” with Syrian silk and to sell it as Syrian ²).

The wide geographical distribution of sericulture accounted in part for the great variety of silk fabrics encountered in the Geniza records; another factor was the refined techniques of processing and dyeing silk and combining it with other fibers, such as linen, or with gold- or silver-threads.

If we exclude the dyers, silk workers were of two categories: the handlers of the cocoons and of raw silk, *ḥarīrī*, and the weavers, *qazḡāḡ*. The cocoon of the silkworm consists of two different parts: a core of compact, continuous filament—the only animal fiber which needs no spinning; this has to be unraveled and reeled, a task confided to specialists called *naqqād*, or “unraveler”. For although this work may be done even by children, it requires expert knowledge and great dexterity to do it in a commercially sound way. “Do not move with your silk”, writes a merchant from Alexandria to his correspondent in

1) Cf. W. Heyd, *Commerce du Levant* II, p. 671 and *Med. Soc.*, Chapters III and VIII.

2) “Local”: *baladī*, Philadelphia, Dropsie College 344, [India book 272], l. 2; cf. also UL Cambridge 1080 J 284 [India book 249]; Philadelphia, Dropsie 400, l. 8 (the three letters are from the twelfth century). Ma‘ālim al-Qurba ed. Reuben Levy, p. 45 of the English summary. See also W. F. Leggett, *The Story of Silk*, p. 133.

Old Cairo, at a time when the material was scarce, "except in the event that trustworthy unravelers are available, who might unravel a small quantity (literally "a small reel") good for the countryside", i.e. who were able to pick out the inferior variety traded outside the capital ¹).

The layers of loose filament covering the core of the cocoon (the so-called waste silk) have to be spun like other fibers. As opposed to *maqūd*, unraveled silk, we often find in the Geniza letters *maqshūr* or *muqashshar*, "peeled of" silk and the worker handling it called *muqashshir* "peeler" ²). It is interesting that the modern Italian word for floss silk (tangled waste silk), *catarzo*, already appears in a business letter of the eleventh century (in the form *qatārish*). Fraudulent weavers mingled it with raw silk, after both had been dyed ³).

The preponderance of the Jews in the silk industry as reflected in the Geniza records, might have had its origin in the fact that it was an ancient local industry in Palestine ⁴), or in the wide ranging travels of the Jewish Rahdāniyya merchants of the ninth century, which brought them regularly to China, where they might have had opportunity to make themselves acquainted with the professional intricacies of silk production ⁵). The two factors might have acted in combination and there were, perhaps, others. In any case, the Jews by no means had a monopoly in this branch. In his studious Ph. D. thesis about the economic activities of Muslim scholars prior to the time of the Crusaders, Mr. Hayyim Cohen found no less than eighty-four who either bore the family names silkworker, silkweaver, or silkmerchant, or

1) T.-S. 13 J 22 f. 30, ll. 20-22. The word for "reel": *maslak*.

2) T.-S. 13 J 3 f. 4, ll. 12 and 21: *khazẓāsh maqshūr waghair maqshūr*; 20.69 verso ll. 5 and 19: *lāsin muqashshar*; Oxford e 98, f. 64 b, l. 12: (*harīr*) *muqashshar*. T.-S. 13 Ja 2, ed. H. Hirschfeld, JQR 16, p. 577: *Ibn al-muqashshir*. This identification of "peeled" with waste and spun silk is tentative.

3) Oxford d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 42 [N 221], ll. 5 and 7. Ma'ālim al-Qurba, ed. Reuben Levy, English summary, p. 45; Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* 63 (both with question marks as to the meaning). According to a suggestion by Professor R. S. Lopez in his letter to me of November 25, 1959, the word is probably derived from Greek *katartarioi*, silk spinners.

4) S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archaeologie*, Leipzig, 1910, I, pp. 141-2 and 543-4.

5) Cf. *Med. Soc.*, Chapter III.

were reported as having been actually engaged in these occupations.

Linen looms very large in the Geniza, even larger than silk, or indeed than all other textiles combined. For flax was the main industrial crop of Egypt, and at least seventeen local varieties appear in our records. However, it is the trade, not the industry, which is reflected in them, and therefore the discussion of these details falls outside the scope of this article. As a matter of fact, the word *kattān*, which in Arabic designates both flax and linen, should in most cases be taken in the first meaning, for it was flax fiber, not linen fabric, which formed the main object of international trade, as far as reflected in the Geniza. Consequently, we mostly hear about work connected with the preparation of flax and not the weaving of linen.

After having been pulled, the flax plant has to be retted, i.e. to be soaked in water in order to separate the fiber from the woody core. While exposed to dampness, the plants have to be turned. These operations were done by the farmers themselves. Therefore, the product in this stage of preparation was called in the technical language of the Geniza letters "flax of the farmers" ¹⁾. After this, the "flax workers" took over, first to do the scutching, i.e. the beating of the dried plant in order to separate the fiber from the seeds, the latter to be used for the preparation of "hot oil" or "seed oil", as it was called at that time. In this stage, too, the flax was traded, designated as "scutched flax" ²⁾. Then came the hatcheling, i.e. combing out, disentangling and cleaning of the fibers, a most responsible task, as the quality of the yarn depended largely on this operation. Three times it is said in one letter that the addressee should supervise "the combing" himself and not buy flax which had already been hatcheled ³⁾. After this

1) "The farmers are at present occupied with the turning of the flax", T.-S. 13 J 23, f. 16, l. 17. "Flax of the farmers, *muṣṣārī'in*" as opposed to the "flax of the workers, *ṣunnā'*". 13 J 27, f. 18 margin.

2) "I bought excellent flax, coming from the scutching of the workers". T.-S. 13 J 27, f. 18, l. 17. In Arabic *naṣṣā' al-ṣunnā'*, cf. Dozy, *Supplément* II 703a (From the Arabian Nights). A detailed interesting report about scutching in the great flax growing center of Buṣīr is contained in ms. Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, ENA 4020, f. 20.

3) Budapest, David Kaufmann Collection XXVIII, ll. 22, 29 and margin,

operation, the flax fiber was ready for spinning¹⁾. When a bashful young Jewish man is recommended in a letter as being very good at *kattān* work, certainly the scutching and hatcheling of flax, not the artistic weaving of linen was intended²⁾. The latter was the domain of the heirs of ancient Pharaonic Egypt, the Christian Copts.

Cotton, today the staple crop of Egypt, was of no great consequence in our period. In its raw state, it was imported into Egypt both from Syria and from the West (Sicily, Tunisia), as we read repeatedly in the Geniza records³⁾. Cotton *goods*, of course, were one of the main imports, both from Tunisia and from India. Therefore, we hear much about the trade in cotton, but next to nothing about its manufacture⁴⁾.

As sheep breeding seems to have been ubiquitous owing to the then very vital cheese production connected with it, wool must have been available everywhere for industrial purposes. Egypt appears in the Geniza papers both as an exporter and as an importer of wool and hair⁵⁾. Any clothing, including even the huge *buqyār* turbans, could be made from this material, and as far as finer fabrics are concerned it was used, as in classical times, in particular for purple cloth⁶⁾. Wool-

tastamshithu anta walā tashtaribi mamshūf min kattānāni. "(Flax-)comber", *mashbāf*, as a family name, cf. Mose ben Maimon, *Epistulae*, ed. D. H. Baneth, Jerusalem, 1946, p. 70, l. 18.

1) T.-S. 13 J 15, f. 19, l. 12, where *kattān manfūsh* must have the same or a similar meaning as *mamshūf*, i.e., hatcheled, as the context shows.

2) T.-S. 13 J 15, f. 15, ll. 16-17 *yūḥsin 'amal al-kattān*.

3) Cotton from Tripoli, Lebanon: UL Cambridge 1080 J 17 [N 85], l. 3; T.-S. 13 J 16, f. 19 [N 224], l. 19. From Tunisia: T.-S. 20.76, l. 21. However, as we hear mostly of cotton *goods* coming from Tunisia, "two bales of cotton" *riḡmatain quṭn*, may here simply mean cotton *fabrics*. The Syrians imported cotton also into Tunisia, cf. T.-S. 13 J 19, f. 27 [N 14], l. 20, and so did the *Rūm*, ib., obviously from Sicily, cf. Amari-Nallino, *Musulmani di Sicilia*, II, p. 512.

4) It is therefore difficult to explain technical terms not found elsewhere, e.g., *raṭlain quṭn muḡbid*, literally two pounds of "foaming" or "cream-colored" cotton, T.-S. 13 J 25, f. 15, l. 15.

5) Egypt as exporter of wool: Budapest, David Kaufmann Collection 14 margin (ordinary and purple). Importer: T.-S. 8 J 22 f. 18 (from the West); 13 J 14, f. 17, ll. 11-12 (hair from Syria).

6) Wool clothings: *mayzar* T.-S. 13 J 35 f. 10, top; *buqyār*, ib., l. 17. Purple: see preceding note and T.-S. Box K 15, f. 71 (the writer, a purple dyer, pays "25" to a wool maker).

makers or -sellers, *ṣawwāf*, are frequently mentioned, but no noteworthy technical details about this industry have been listed so far ¹⁾).

In addition to the main textiles: silk, linen, cotton and wool, some minor fibers are mentioned in the Geniza records, the most fanciful of them being "sea wool", threads produced by a large maritime mollusk, which have a golden luster and take on various colors during the day. Known in Italy from Roman times to the present day, it was counted by the Muslims as one of the marvels of "the West", and the Umayyad rulers of Spain used to forbid its export. In a large order for precious textiles we find also one for two covers of sea wool each twenty-four cubits long and woven together with green and red silk ²⁾).

The high degree of specialization and division of labor, noted above as characteristic for the industry of the Mediterranean area in the High Middle Ages was particularly conspicuous in the dyeing industry. This was due, on the one hand, to the enormous variety of colors, favored in those times, and to the great skill and experience required in using the many natural and industrial dyes available. While men today are normally satisfied with various shades of gray, brown, blue, black and white, the mediaeval man, like tropical singing birds, liked, in addition to these colors, green, red and intense yellow, and above all, intricate nuances with all kinds of "glitter", "gloss", iridescence, stripes, waves and patterns ³⁾). Needless to say, the fair sex did not stay behind in this respect, although the colorful fabrics were displayed between the four walls of a house or the "Turkish" bath, rather than in public. The carpets, couches and drapery decorating the

1) T.-S. Box K 25, f. 169; 13 J 16, f. 15 and frequently: the bazaar of the wool-makers. See also preceding note.

2) Hemp is mentioned only as used for ropes, UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 39. Sea wool: Or 1080 J 77, l. 24. About sea wool, see Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* XV-XVI, p. 60.

3) Glitter: *talmī*⁴, UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 77, ll. 10.14.28; gloss: *ṣaytūnī mujallā* (of "satin"), T.-S. 20.69, verso l. 20; iridescence: *ṭaṣṣī* (like a peacock) 12.372, l. 9, or *ṣākhīṭī* (like a ring dove) Or. 1080 J 77, ll. 2.7.19.23; stripes (many expressions); waves: *mu'arraḡ* 12.133, l. 29; patterns: *mulawwan*, cf. Med. Soc. II. Naturally, many terms still defy explanation, e.g., Budapest, David Kaufmann Coll. XII, where a silk weaver asks for instructions as to the pattern of the desired fabric ("do you wish it *bisakākīn*?").

rooms showed the same variety in coloring and treatment as the clothing.

As may be remarked in passing, the Geniza people were by no means barbarians running riot with colors. The careful descriptions of the exact hues desired and the frequent requests that the colors of the parts of a dress ordered—even of shoes and a dress—match each other, betray taste, although most probably a taste different from our own. In addition, as we learn both expressly and indirectly, even at that time there were marked differences between one country and another in this respect. Iran, it seems, was most extravagant in its predilection for variety in colors, while austere Jerusalem, and Palestine in general, preferred simple black and red. In any case, the taste of the people represented in the Geniza papers was widely different from that of the Iraqi dandies of the early tenth century known to us so well from a special study devoted to them by a contemporary¹).

In order to give the reader an idea of the color-intoxication of this age, a few quotations from orders for textiles and from lists of trousseaus may be quoted here: "Five fine covers, one gazelle blood, one pure violet, one reddish brown ("musk-colored"), one silvery, one intense yellow; two others pure, clean white, inclining to yellow". "Eight pairs of (small) prayer carpets, two white, two indigo blue, two green, two red". "Please, my lord, the red should be as red as possible, likewise the white and the yellow should be exquisite, I was not satisfied with the yellow The siglaton robe is of the utmost beauty, but not exactly what I wanted, for it is white and blue, while I wanted to have, instead of the latter, onion color, an "open" color. The lead-colored (i.e. blueish gray) robe is superb, better than all the rest"²).

1) Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, Geniza Misc. 15. Palestine: T.-S. 13 J 22 f. 10, verso l. 9. For the Iraqi dandies, cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* XV-XVI, pp. 78-79 and Mhammed Farid Ghazi, Un group social: les Raffinés, *Studia Islamica* 11, pp. 39-71.

2) UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 77, ll. 22.27.30. Prayer carpets: *musallayāt* (with *s* instead of *ṣ*, the writer most probably was an Iranian). T.-S. 12.133, ll. 11.19.23-24. *Siglaton* is a mediaeval French and English term for the *siglātūn*, a fabric of heavy damask, cf. W. Heyd, *Commerce du Levant* II, p. 700. Lead-colored: *raṣāṣī*—a color

In the lists of the clothing and bedding brought in by a bride, colors are not regularly indicated, because the description of an item and the fabric from which it was made were sufficient for its identification. Therefore the reader has to bear in mind that the specifications given here for two such lists refer only to a minority of the materials mentioned. The trousseau of the daughter of an India merchant, married in Old Cairo in 1146, contained items in the following colors: white 6, cloud-blue 3, cloud-blue with gold threads 1, pomegranate red 4, blue 3, pearl-colored 2, ash gray ("color of bamboo crystals") 2, green 2, saffron 1; not yet identified 4¹⁾. Another bride, from the same time and environment, had quite a different taste: pearl-colored 4, white with golden threads 3, violet 2, blue 2, unbleached linen 2, basil-colored (brownish violet) 1, sky-blue 1, cloud-blue 1, white 1, gilded 1, emerald 1, sand-colored 1; not yet identified 4²⁾.

In face of such demands on their art, the dyers had to specialize according to the coloring matter used by them. Thus we find specialists in crimson, saffron, sumac, purple, vermillion, or indigo etc. ³⁾. However even when a person was not called *qirmizīnī*, *ṣaʿfarānī* or *sammāq*, i.e. dyers with crimson, saffron or sumac (the English words are derived from the Arabic), but was designated by the general word dyer, we hear occasionally that one was engaged in dyeing red or another in dyeing silk with turquoise blue ⁴⁾. Likewise, in legal deeds, the dyes used in the workshop referred to would be indicated ⁵⁾. All this points to a high degree of specialization in this industry.

popular in the Geniza. According to Heyd, the siglaton used to be dark blue. "Open" color: *maftūḥ*. According to A. Barthélemy, *Dict. Arabe-Française*, Paris, 1935, p. 47, *baṣālī* designates today in Syria the color of the onion skin, however, according to the context, the reference here is more likely to the violet gray of an onion cut open.

1) Oxford d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 47.

2) T.-S. 12.12.

3) *Qirmizīnī*, T.-S. 13 J 27 f. 4, l. 8; *ṣaʿfarānī*, T.-S. 16.272, verso, l. 17; *sammāq*, T.-S. 20.92 C. l. 6; *arjawānī*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 66 I, l. 5 and often; *munayyir*, T.-S. 13 J 24, f. 14, K 6 f. 177. In some cases, the reference might be to merchants specializing in the coloring matter. In others the names appear in lists of receivers of alms or of payers of the reduced poll tax, which suggests that they belonged to the working rather than to the merchant class.

4) *Al-maʿrūf biṣabgh al-ḥarīr al-fairūzī*, T.-S. 13 J 4, f. 11.

5) E.g., purple: T.-S. NS 94 J 150; indigo: T.-S. Box K 25, f. 153.

The dyeing constituted a large percentage of the final cost of a fabric. An eleventh century account gives the following details:

Unbleached silk, 66 pounds	300 dinars
Loss ¹⁾ on these	20 dinars
Crimson for the dyeing	85 dinars
Expenses (customs etc.)	25 dinars
Wages for the dyers.	20 dinars
For dyeing antimony-black and green ²⁾	24 dinars

Total 174 dinars

Grand Total 474 dinars

Quantity of dyed silk, 63 pounds.

Thus, out of a total cost of 474 dinars, 129 dinars, over one quarter, were spent on the dyeing. The price of the coloring matter was over four times as much as the wages for the dyers ³⁾.

In addition to dyeing, fibers and fabrics had to undergo various other treatments before being ready for use, in particular processes of bleaching and blanching, about which we read very much in the Geniza records. These, as well as other aspects of the clothing industry, such as glossing, tailoring, lining and embroidery are better treated in connection with trade and clothing. In any case here too, each process and each piece of clothing was attended to by a separate group of artisans specializing in it.

(b) *Metals, Glass and Pottery*

Next to textiles, metals and minerals, and above all the gold-, silver-, copper- and iron industries, were predominant in mediaeval arts and crafts. Gold- and silver work, including jewelry in general,

1) During the transport or customs formalities some pounds of silk were lost. For at the end there were only 63 pounds, despite of the fact that a fabric normally gains weight while being dyed.

2) A small quantity of silk was dyed with colors other than crimson; the account does not specify for them the cost of the coloring matter and the wages.

3) Freer Gallery, Washington, XIV, ll. 1-8, Gottheil-Worrell, p. 72. In l. 8, the ms. has *'khl*, i.e., *akhl*, black with bluish luster, as antimony.

must be mentioned first, because in actual life it occupied a position quite different from the one it has today. Besides its function as ornament, it served largely as a means of investment and savings. A great variety of forms and combinations of metals and precious stones appear in the lists of trousseaus and other Geniza documents, and even where gold and silver were traded as metal, the merchants preferred to have them in ornaments rather than in bars. Moreover, silver vessels were much more in use than they are nowadays. As to copper, many of the better kitchen utensils were made of this material, which appears regularly near the end of longer lists of marriage portions, as do gold and silver ornaments at their beginnings.

The general word for gold- and silversmith in Arabic, *ṣā'igh*, means "one who gives form". It was used all over the Arabic speaking world¹⁾ and, like French *orfèvre* and Spanish *platero*, referred to both metals, no doubt because they were normally handled by one and the same artisan. There must have been also specialists for goldsmithery, as the relevant word *dhahabī*, "goldman", is met with very frequently in the Geniza, although, curiously enough, it is not registered in the Arabic dictionaries²⁾. To be sure, the corresponding Hebrew *ṣehāvī* was a very familiar term in Talmudic literature. Another branch of this craft was that of the "maker of ornaments", or jeweler, *ḥallā'*³⁾.

In addition to coppersmiths in general, we find persons specializing in casting, hammering or burnishing this metal, which was traded

1) E.g., Ceuta in Morocco, T.-S. 12.3, Mosul in northern Mesopotamia, T.-S. 20.128, verso 18. Rendered in mediaeval Hebrew by *ḥārāsh*, MT I, p. 74, Note 25.

2) E.g., T.-S. 16.116 (Old Cairo, 11th century); T.-S. 16.138 (Alexandria 1077); Vienna, Coll. Erzherzog Rainer 45 (Old Cairo 1019), publ. by S. Asaf, *Tarbiz* 9 (1938), p. 197. T.-S. 8 K 22, p. 2, publ. by MJ II 320. Freer Collection XIII, l. 44, publ. Gottheil-Worrell, p. 70. Dozy, *Supplément* I, p. 687 has the word under *s.m. nṭārī*, which Yāqūt, quoted in M. Amari, *Bibl. Arabo-Sicula* 113, 5, explains as *dhahabī* according to Maghribi usage. Persons called *s.m. nṭārī* (once written with *ṣ*) are mentioned in T.-S. Box K 15, f. 29, as buyers of 'abir.

However *ḥiddī*, "silverman", occurs very rarely, e.g., Freer Collection XIII, l. 51, Gottheil-Worrell, p. 70, and might refer to a person trading in silver.

3) T.-S. Box K 15, f. 48, l. 6; Box 25, f. 103 [India Book 208], l. 43. Today in certain parts of Yemen, *ḥallā'* is the common word for gold- and silver smith. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément* I, p. 319b (from al-Maqqari).

either as cast or hammered ¹). Copper was often alloyed with tin (for the manufacture of bronze vessels), wherefore "tinner", trader in, or processor of tin, is a term and a family name common in the Geniza ²). However, tin dishes and other vessels, so frequent in mediaeval Poland and other northern European countries, have not been traced thus far in our papers.

Lead was another metallic substance much in use, and much traded, and was dealt with by specialists, whose workshop was called "kitchen", as in other industries requiring processes of heating ("cooking") ³). A by-product of this industry was litharge, an oxide of lead used in the manufacture of glass and other materials, and in medicine for the preparation of a popular eye powder. The preparers of the lead oxide also formed a profession by themselves ⁴).

The metal industry was subdivided not only according to the materials and the various treatments required by them, but even more by the type of objects made. E.g. bells, in particular the little bells on the necks of the beasts of burden, were in the crowded narrow streets of that period even more vital than the horns in our cars today. Therefore, bell makers, as the Geniza shows, must have been numerous on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, as they were in Milan, Italy, in 1288, when an enthusiastic encomium of that city described the makers of the sweet-sounding brass bells which were attached to the breasts of the horses as one of its marvels ⁵). The ubiquitous urban

1) Caster, *sabbāk*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 6, C I, l. 6. Burnisher, *jallā*, ib. l. 5. Hammerer, *darrāb*. Cast copper, *sabika*, Oxford a 3 (Catal. 2873), f. 26, verso ll. 11-13; hammered copper, *maḍrūb*, T.-S. 12.291, l. 16. The terms are particularly common in the Indian trade.

2) Tinner: *qaṣḍīrī* (from Greek *kassiteros*), Freer Gallery, Washington, IX, ll. 7 and 16, Gottheil-Worrell, pp. 44 and 46, or *ya'mal al-qaṣḍīr*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 96, IV, l. 27.

3) Worker or/and dealer in lead: *raṣṣās*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 102, l. 7 (a workman); 13 J 19 f 4 (a merchant). "Kitchen" for processing lead: T.-S. 12.606, l. 1.

4) Preparers of litharge: *martakī*, T.-S. Box J 1, f. 4 c, l. 25; Box K 15, f. 50 D I, l. 15. The English word is Greek and means "silverstone", the Arabic word is Persian, meaning "impure stone", both designations referring to the silvery color of this material.

5) Bell makers: *jalājilī*, e.g., T.-S. 8 J 26, f. 19, l. 5, cf. S. D. Goitein in JQR 44 (1953), p. 43, Note 19; UL Cambridge 1080 J 113, l. 2. Not yet noted in an Arab

blacksmiths were probably occupied mostly with horseshoes, a commodity as commonplace then as tires are now¹). Locksmiths are less frequently mentioned, for the locks on doors of houses and rooms were at that time of wood (as they still are in Yemen) and made by carpenters, or rather a particular group of carpenters specializing in this commodity²). There were, of course, cutlers, and craftsmen concentrating on spoons (forks were not used in those days), but also on such objects as hooks, razors, or needles³). The manufacture of arms also was very much specialized⁴), but the Jews represented in the Geniza papers, unlike those in nineteenth century Yemen, do not seem to have participated in this industry.

On the other hand, the manufacture of glass must have been one of the most favorite Jewish occupations. This could have been assumed even on the basis of sporadic references in literary sources⁵). It is proved beyond doubt by the testimony of the Geniza records. Various factors might have contributed to this predilection. The Palestine-

dictionary. About the obligation to suspend brass- or iron bells on the necks of beasts carrying water, cf. Ma'ālim al-Qurba, ed. Reuben Levy, 1938, p. 97 of the English summary. For Milan 1288, cf. Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, p. 62.

1) Blacksmith: *ḥaddād*, T.-S. 8 J 22, f. 10, verso l. [N 3] the blacksmith from Baghdad; UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 152, from Qayrawān, it seems. 8 J 19, f. 24 [N 151], l. 17 in Old Cairo. In T.-S. 20.163 "the man doing iron work" (in Hebrew), obviously from Palestine.

2) Locksmith: *aqṣālī*. Two locksmiths, brothers, contributing to a public fund; T.-S. Box K 15, f. 10. (Dozy, *Supplément*, has found the word only in a nineteenth century dictionary). Makers of locks from wood (*ghalaq*): *ghallāq*, T.-S. 12.684, verso; 12.462, l. 3 (966 A.D.), publ. S. Asaf, *Tarbiz* 9, p. 204; T.-S. 20.6, l. 12 (1037), Asaf, *ib.*, p. 30. (Not noted in an Arab dictionary). Cf. also T.-S. 16.49 (979 A.D.), publ. S. Asaf, *Yerushalayim*, 1953, p. 110, where the same persons as in 12.462 are mentioned. In Ma'ālim al-Qurba (see above Note 59), Arabic Text, p. 236, the wooden locks are called *ḍibāb*.

3) Cutler: *sakākīnī*. Spoonmaker: *malā'iqī*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 48 III, l. 3 (a Persian). A maker of hooks (as used by butchers): *ṣanānārī*, T.-S., N.S. 94 J 151 B; of razors: *mawwās*, T.-S. 8 J 16, f. 27 verso, l. 11. Needlemaker: *abbār*, 12.362 [N 238] ll. 8.11. For the latter, cf. Ma'ālim al-Qurba, Chapter 57.

4) Cf. above, page 171, note 2.

5) S. W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, IV, pp. 168 and 319. Cf. also *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica*, Budapest, 1959, no. 864, about a glass foundry of Spanish Jews in Fogaras, Transylvania (today Romania) in 1697, quoted by J. Komlós, *Kirjath Sepher* 35 (1960), p. 465.

Lebanese coast between Akko and Tyre had been a center of glass manufacture since remote antiquity and continued as such during the Geniza period ¹⁾. Thus an old tradition was operative in this case; indeed "Jewish glass" was a term familiar in France as early (or should we say: as late?) as the seventh century A.D. ²⁾. The elaborate Jewish dietary and purity laws could be more easily observed with the use of glass vessels ³⁾. Tentatively, two other reasons might be adduced. Jews were everywhere closely connected with the royal or provincial mints. In these, and in assaying in general, glass weights were used for determining the exact weight of coins and weights, and modern scholars have marvelled at the fact that mediaeval craftsmen had been able to produce glass weights precisely indicating fractions of a gram. Another favorite Jewish occupation, pharmaceuticals, also used glass vessels of different description, size and color, as we learn again from the Geniza ⁴⁾. However, here, as in other cases, there existed by no means denominational exclusiveness. The house of a Jewish goldsmith in Old Cairo bordered on that of a Christian glassmaker, and Copts are known as manufacturers of glass weights ⁵⁾.

Besides Tyre and Beirut, Egypt itself was a great center of the glass industry with an age old tradition, stemming from Pharaonic times. It seems, however, that it was not Alexandria, as in the Roman period, but Old Cairo, which was the main producer, for most of the Geniza material on glass manufacture comes from the latter city. The glass manufactured there was called "local", an epithet which smacks slightly

1) Thirty seven bales of glass, sent by three Jewish firms from Tyre are referred to in a document dated 1011. T.-S. 13 J 33, f. 5, publ. S. Assaf, *Tarbiḥ* 9 (1938), p. 196. In ms. Oxford c 28 (Catal. 2876), f. 32, the craftsman from Tyre most probably was a glassmaker.

Red glass from Beirut: Westminster College, Cairens. Frgt. [India book 50], verso, ll. 28-29.

2) Cf. Baron, quoted above, p. 186, note 5.

3) Indirectly, this aspect is evident in a query sent around 1134 from Aden to a religious authority in Old Cairo, where it was asked whether translucent Chinese porcelain could be regarded as glass for ritual purposes, cf. India Book 33-34.

4) Glass vessels in stores: Budapest, David Kaufmann Collection, XX; T.-S. Box K 15, f. 9; T.-S. 12.525; Maimonides Responsa, ed. J. Blau, p. 137.

5) T.-S. 16.116 (1010 A.D.). The name of the Christian glassmaker was Maliḥ.

of inferior quality. It may have been referred to also in a letter from Aden, where the writer orders "a wicker work basket with red glasses from Beirut, and if they cannot be had, white glasses" ¹⁾. We also hear of a Byzantine glass maker travelling from Alexandria to Cairo and "a Jewish glass maker" delivering in Old Cairo letters "from the West", destined for people in Alexandria, which seems to indicate that he himself had come by land from Tunisia ²⁾. However, an eleventh century Mr. Glaser in Ramle, Palestine, was a dealer in oil ³⁾. Four contracts of partnership in a glass workshop have come to light so far.

Pottery, albeit sparsely represented in the Geniza, also must have been much specialized, as evident from our records. The *fakhkhār* or *fākhurānī*, manufactured clay pipes and other clay material used in buildings and installed them himself, wherefore he appears in documents related to the repair of houses. The products of this industry are mentioned also as exports from Rosetta, Egypt, to Sicily ⁴⁾. The *qaddār* made pots and other receptacles, sent e.g. from Tinnīs, Lower Egypt, to Ramle, Palestine ⁵⁾. No doubt, here too, each type of vessels was made by a separate group of artisans, although so far only two have been noted: the *kūẓī*, maker of narrow-necked water jugs without a spout, and the *ghaḍā'irī*, the manufacturer of porcelain-like translucent dishes ⁶⁾. The *mukhfiyāt* pottery, a specialty of the Muslim West, eight pieces of which were sent from Spain to Egypt in 1137 (a year of

1) Local glass, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, Geniza Misc. 27, as opposed to red glass. See also above, p. 187, note 1, end.

2) Philadelphia, University Museum E 16 517, l. 10, cf. JQR 49 (1958), p. 47; T.-S. 13 J 14, f. 2 [N 17], l. 8.

3) T.-S. 13 J 22, f. 10 verso, l. 11.

4) *Fakhkhār*: UL Cambridge Add 3340, verso l. 3 (Jews in Spain, 1130); cf. Tarbiz 24 (1955), p. 145. Box K 15, f. 100 verso 7 and 12 (Old Cairo). Sent from Rosetta: Budapest, David Kaufmann Coll. 22 [N 194] verso 20. *Fākhurānī*: UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 29 (family name of a phlebotomist in Alexandria, 12th century). Cf. Dozy, Supplément II, p. 245a.

5) *Qaddār*: T.-S. Box K 15, f. 244, verso l. 33 (as a low profession). T.-S. 13 J 26, f. 18, ll. 10-12 (Export from Tinnīs). 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 16-17 (a Mr. Potter as proprietor of a ship).

6) *Kūẓī*: T.-S. 13 J 36, f. 11; *ghaḍā'irī*, family name in Bagdad, thirteenth century, Diwan of Elazar ha-Babli, ed. H. Brody, Jerusalem 1935, p. 94.

heavy warfare in the Mediterranean), were certainly manufactured by experts ¹⁾. However, whether *maddār* "worker in clay" was a technical or a dialectical variant, cannot be made out at present, for it was noted only for Mosul, where the word might have been only a local term for the first or second occupation mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph ²⁾. The great variety of forms developed by the ceramics industry of that period is reflected in inventories of pharmacies, doctors dispensaries, and stores, as well as in occasional references with regard to private homes ³⁾.

(c) *Leather, Parchment and Paper*

In the absence of synthetic fabrics, leather played a far more important role in the period under discussion than it does today. It even seems that it was more widely used than in Greco-Roman times, which may perhaps be explained as a remnant from nomadic Arabia, when hides were more easily available than pottery. Skins and various types of leather bags served as receptacles for oversea transport, while leather bottles were normally used in daily life for carrying oil, wine or other fluids, but also for flour. Makers of leather bottles are frequently mentioned in our records, and a street was named after them in Old Cairo ⁴⁾.

Since transport inside a town or overland was by riding beasts, saddle making was a great industry ⁵⁾. Shoes were perhaps worn less than in our own days, but there was a great variety of them, and people must have been very particular in this respect, since we find orders for

1) T.-S. 13 J 27, f. 17, l. 19. Dozy, *Supplément I* 387b has the plural *makhbāfi*.

2) T.-S. 20.128 verso. In certain parts of Yemen today, *maddār* is simply a potter. It is noteworthy that S. Spiro's dictionary of the modern Egyptian vernacular does not note this word at all.

3) Cf. *Med. Soc.*, Chapters V and VIII.

4) A maker of leather bottles, *baṭṭa*, e.g., with flour, T.-S. 13 J 25, f. 2 is invariably called *baṭṭāf*, T.-S. 24.76; Box K 15, f. 66 Ia; K 15, f. 96, while Ma'ālim al-Qurba, ed. Reuben Levy, p. 229 of the Arabic text, has *baṭāfi*. *Zuqāq al-baṭṭāfi*: e.g., T.-S. 12.264.

5) The Geniza has both *sarrāj*, T.-S. 12.545, verso 13; T.-S. 20.187; 13 J 35 f 7, verso 1, and *sarji*, Box K 15, f. 18, l. 17. *Sarrāj* has also meanings other than saddler, cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. and for *sarji* one expects *surji*.

shoes from other countries even for personal use. In one single list, three types of shoemakers are mentioned, and correspondingly various kinds of footwear appear in our records. To be sure, not all of these were made of leather. In Spain, then as today, corkwood was a familiar material ¹⁾).

Hides, in various states of treatment, were found in every household; for the low, movable table on which one dined was put on a hide, in order to protect the carpet from stains and for easy disposal of crumbs and other food remains. Such dining room hides were often given as presents and most probably were prepared for this task by appropriate decorations.

Certain references in Muslim and other mediaeval sources convey the impression that tanning was an exclusively or predominantly Jewish occupation ²⁾). This, however, is not borne out by the Geniza records. Whether in lists of taxpayers, donators, or receivers of alms, in legal documents or private correspondence—tanners appear only sporadically and the family name Tanner is also extremely rare. Likewise, the Muslim handbooks of market supervision clearly indicate that this profession was not exercised primarily by non-Muslims.

Although the invention of paper restricted the use of parchment and vellum, still they were very much in demand in our period. Torah scrolls and the sacred writings of Muslims and Christians, as far as used in public service, were written on vellum and so were many other religious, scientific and literary works, as we learn from book lists found in the Geniza, and, of course, from manuscripts which have been preserved. Certain types of deeds, such as marriage contracts and bills of divorce and manumission, and many others also were written on this durable material and so were epistles emanating from authorities, especially if they had the character of circular letters. In Tunisia, private letters and accounts were written on parchment well down to the middle of the eleventh century, while in the East the transition to

1) Three words for shoe-maker: *iskāf*, *ḥadhdhāʾ*, *kharrāz* in T.-S. Box K 15, f. 14. Corkshoes, *agrāq*: ULC Or 1080 J77, l. 31 (20 pairs).

2) Cf. S. W. Baron, *History of the Jews* IV, pp. 166-167.

paper must have been made about a hundred years earlier, as the relevant material from the Geniza proves. The reason for this difference was the fact that Tunisia and Sicily were great centers for the manufacture of leather and the export of hides.

In addition to the parchment maker, the book binder was an important representative of the leather industry. As we learn from one letter, leather book covers were sent ready made from the West to Egypt. Unfortunately, no details are given about these covers except that they were square; however, since we read that Tunisia exported even gilded shoes, it is likely that the book covers sent to Alexandria were similarly decorated, as indeed many Islamic bookcovers are. In general, the covers were either red, black or white ¹⁾).

Paper looms very large in the Geniza records. They tell us, however, more about the trade in this commodity than about its production. Our records seem to indicate that paper, like sugar, was manufactured by factory-like larger establishments rather than by small workshops, as was the practice in other industries of that time. The reason for this difference was perhaps not so much technical as historical. When the secrets of paper making passed from the Chinese to the Arabs around the middle of the eighth century, it was first produced in factories installed by governors, local rulers and caliphs. (Types of paper called after some of such rulers were still in use in the twelfth century, as the Geniza shows). When private enterprise penetrated into this industry, it obviously continued to manufacture paper on a large scale, as had been done when it was first introduced to the Middle East.

(d) *The Building Industry*

Building operations were normally carried out by specialists. When we find that in a small town like Hebron, Palestine, all the members of

¹⁾ Parchment maker: *ruḡūqī* (in receipt of four loaves of bread, perhaps not as a destitute person, but as drawing a part of his emoluments from the community in kind, as other officials in such lists), T.-S. Box K 15, f. 102, II, l. 8. Bookbinder: *ṭabbāq* (his widow receives alms), T.-S. 20.112. Book covers: 100 *jild kutub murabbaʿ*, T.-S. 8 J 25, f. 19 [N 40], l. 15 (second part of eleventh century). Gilded shoes: 8 J 22, f. 18, l. 10 (slightly earlier). In the booklist T.-S. 16.19 (publ. S. Assaf, *Kirjath Sepher* 18, 1942, p. 277), nine covers are red, six are black and five white (middle of twelfth century).

the local community participated in pulling down a synagogue and erecting a new one on a larger site, this was done in order to have it completed as quickly as possible, and the building, according to the dimensions mentioned, must have been of modest size¹). Mostly we read in our papers about repairs and these, as a rule, were effected by experts.

There were stone cutters, but the main building material in Old Cairo were bricks, *ṭūb*, from which Spanish and English *adobe* is derived. The master masons were normally assisted by one or more helps, either handy men, *raqqāṣīn*, or/and an apprentice, *ṣabī*, and sometimes two masons worked together. Moreover, quite a number of specialists were needed, such as layers of clay pipes, floor-tilers, wall-plasterers, marble workers (bathrooms in better houses were surfaced with marble slabs), makers of ovens and of cesspools, and others whose exact functions have not yet been defined with certainty. Finally, there were the decorators of rooms; when we read that in a poor town like Jerusalem, a decorator received 114 dirhams in wages, we must infer that this type of work constituted a considerable part of the expenditure on the erection or the upkeep of a house²). Whether the *muḥawwiq*, or painter—a word derived from *ḫa'uq*, mercury—made murals or ornamented buildings otherwise, is not yet evident³). The *mubandiḡ* (with *ḡ*, as its Persian ethymology) was not an architect or engineer as in modern Arabic, but a land surveyor, who had to deal with the fixing or checking of the boundaries of plots and houses⁴).

1) T.-S. Arab. Box 18(2), f. 4, publ. ATaS 45-49.

2) Stone cutter: *ḥajjār*, Mosseri 87 [N 11], l. 11 (family name); layers of claypipes: above, p. 21; floor-tilers: *muballīṭ*, T.-S. Box 8, f. 3 and 18 J 4, f. 12, l. 34. (ca. 1100); wall-plasterers: *muṭayyin*, Oxford b11 (Catal. 2874), f. 5, l. 6 (dated 1040); marble worker: *rakḥkḥām*, T.-S. 24.40, l. 47 (family name); maker of ovens: *tannūrī* 13 J 28, f. 24, l. 13 (family name); of cesspools: *ḥashshāsh*, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 45; decorators: *muḥayyin*, T.-S. 18 J 2, f. 18, l. 21.

3) *Al-Muḥawwiq* in document dated 982 (T.-S. 16.142, publ. MT I 363), 1027 (T.-S. N.S. 94 J 51, l. 2), 1026/7 (8 J 6, f. 18), it seems all referring to different members of one family. The same family name appears in the thirteenth century: UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 113, l. 4. As the Ma'ālim al-Qurba, Arabic Text, p. 237, ll. 13-16, emphasizes that the *dabbānūm* (painters in oil) should be prohibited to paint figures, it is likely that this was then still generally done.

4) T.-S. 8 J 5, f. 12, where the *mubandiḡīn* are dealing with a dispute about a house; Cambridge, Westminster College Arab. II, f. 79: a scholar called son of the *mubandiḡ*.

Carpenters and sawyers are also regularly mentioned in connection with building operations. Modern builders get the lumber needed for a house ready for use from a yard. In the Geniza records we see that the proprietor bought the timber, then first employed sawyers to saw it on the spot according to the dimensions required, and later on a carpenter would fix the beams, staircases, railings and other parts made of wood. However, doors and the like were manufactured in the carpenter's shop, also, it seems, as a specialty work ¹).

Furniture made of wood was used far less in those days than is customary in our civilization. In its manufacture, the carpenters were joined by the turners and the chest makers, both large professions, which gave their names to a gate and a street, respectively, in Old Cairo ²). The carpenters specializing in the making of wooden doorlocks have been mentioned above, p. 186.

(e) *The Preparation of Food*

The higher a civilization, the more it devolves the preparation of food from the shoulders of the housewife to specialized industries. In a primitive economy, as in most parts of Yemen, South Arabia, women get up long before sunrise for the toilsome work of grinding the stone mill and baking bread, and in many houses bread is baked for each meal anew, for their menfolk like to eat it warm and fresh, as it comes from the oven. We normally buy our bread and cakes ready-made in the store.

The civilization represented in the Geniza records ranks somewhere between these two extremes, but is decidedly nearer to our own. Each house would lay in stores of wheat, but the women were not expected to do the grinding. This was done by millers found all over

1) Carpenters and sawyers employed in buildings: T.-S. Box K 5, f. 76; K 15, f. 45, cf. above II(3), Note 21; K 15, f. 100, verso ll. 13 and 17; UL Cambridge Or 1080 J 104. Doors made in a carpenter's shop: T.-S. 8 J 7 f. 18.

2) Turners: *kharrāfīn*, T.-S. K 15, f. 58, l. 13 (as contributors); 13 J 9, f. 5 (The son of the turner signing a document in 1047). The Gate of the Turners: T.-S. 12.525 and 16.72, cf. E. J. Worman, JQR 18, p. 26. The Street of the Chest makers: *ṣanādiqīn*, T.-S. 13 J 3, f. 9.

the city ¹⁾. When a husband went overseas on extended travels, he would assign to his wife both fixed quantities of wheat, and money for grinding it ²⁾. One could also buy flour (of different grades of fineness) in stores specializing in this commodity ³⁾. The baking would be done by a baker, and many would simply buy loaves of bread, which, for easier computation, normally had the weight of one pound ⁴⁾.

Cakes, called *ka'k* in Arabic (a word which seems, however, not to be connected with its English equivalent), also were normally bought in the bazaar, and the name or designation *ka'kī*, or cake-master, is rather frequent ⁵⁾. Here is an order to a cake master, carefully written on a tiny piece of paper: "To the elder Abī Sa'd—may God preserve him. Please receive two pennies as earnest money and give the bearer a pound of well done ringlets (probably a type of doughnuts), and if you make cakes to-morrow, prepare two pounds of little cakes of utmost smallness for me" ⁶⁾. The pastry-cook, *khamīrī*, was another familiar figure ⁷⁾.

A fourteenth century Muslim scholar describes how Jewish cake makers used to squirt sesame oil on the cakes from their mouth and

1) Cf. E. J. Worman, *Notes on the Jews in Fustat*, JQR 18 (1905), pp. 30-32. In addition to the mills situated inside the city mentioned there (one adjoining the house of the Head of the Congregations, cf. ib., p. 32), cf. e.g., T.-S. 13 J 25, f. 19, where a mill is in the immediate vicinity of the house of the Nagid, or head of the Egyptian Jews. A miller as a contributor to a public appeal: T.-S. Box K 15, f. 18, l. 14.

2) T.-S. 8 J 4, f. 18c (Alexandria 1102); 8 J 10, f. 17 (Old Cairo 1133).

3) Seller of flour: *daqqāq*, T.-S. 13 J 25, f. 2. The writer left with him a pawn to get a leather bottle full of flour. Fine flour was called *naqī*, literally pure, T.-S. 12.793 [N 148], l. 22 ff. Two persons called *daqqāq* appear in the list of taxpayers, T.-S. Box K 15, f. 96 II, another in T.-S. 24.76 (receivers of loaves).

4) This is evident from many lists of distribution of loaves to the needy and to community officials, e.g., T.-S. Box K 15, f. 5, 15, 39 and 50.

5) T.-S. Box K 15, f. 43 (contributor); ib., f. 54 III, l. 14 (paying rent); 13 J 24, f. 14, l. 14 (travelling from Alexandria to Cairo); ib., verso, l. 14.

6) Manchester, John Rylands Library, Gaster Collection A 1192. "Ringlets": *ḥulaiqāt*, not yet traced in a dictionary. *Ḥulaiqāt* is a well known place name in Palestine. One distinguished between *khabbāz*, baker (extremely common), and *farrān*, literally "oven-man", most probably a person who did the baking, but not the preparation of the dough; rare, e.g., T.-S. Arabic Box 51, f. 107.

7) *Khamīrī*, T.-S. Box 15, f. 2 II, l. 3. This word, too, seems to be not listed in the dictionaries. However, *Khmīrī* is a family name in Egypt up to the present day. Cf. also Dozy, *Supplément I*, p. 404b, *khāmīrjī* in the same sense. In Persian *khamīra* is either dough or a conserve flavored with the aroma of roses or violets.

warns true believers not to defile themselves by a liquid which had been in the mouth of an infidel. This warning, although characteristic for the religious fanaticism of the later Middle Ages, was certainly conducive to hygiene ¹).

Canned and frozen foods, of course, are modern inventions. However, the mediaeval society reflected in the Geniza papers had an equivalent for these means of alleviating a woman's life, an equivalent indeed, which is only sparsely used by us. Many dishes were prepared by specialist cooks in the bazaar, from where they were brought home and served fresh. Respectable people did not dine out in those days. Workmen, in whose wages often lunch was included, probably had to do so. However, for a member of the middle-class it was a disgrace to take his meal at the *harrās*, the preparer of the *harīsa*, the mediaeval hamburger (ground meat and wheat fried in much fat) ²). This, as well as the food prepared by the maker of *jashīsh* (groats cooked together with meat and dates), or by the "roaster", *shawwā*, the "dinner cook", *ashshī*, or the "meat cook", *ṭabbākh*, in general, were rather taken home, and so were the various cold dishes, such as relishes, made by the *bawāridī*, or vinegar-sauce and other appetizers prepared by the *kāmukhī* ³). All a smart housewife had to do was to tell her husband in the morning what to bring home for dinner in the evening.

1) Ibn al-Hājī (died 1336), al-Madkhal I, p. 239, quoted by E. Strauss (now Ashtor), *The Jews in Egypt and in Syria under the Mamluks* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, I (1944), p. 183.

2) *Harrās* was pronounced *burrās*, British Museum Or 5566 D 24 [India book 89], l. 11, where some Cairene Jewish merchants who made trouble in Aden, are described as having lost face because of eating in the houses of Samaritans, Karaites and *burrāsīn*; T.-S. 18 J 1, f. 6, l. 16, the son of a *harrās* doing work similar to his father's in 1028; T.-S. Box K 15, f. 14 II, l. 2 (payer of reduced poll tax). It is interesting that the Spaniard Ibn 'Abdūn uses this form, cf. *Journal Asiatique* 224 (1934), p. 297, while Ma'ālim al-Qurba, ed. Reuben Levy, p. 108, has *harā'isī*.

3) *Jashshāsh*, Oxford f. 56 (Catal. 2821), pp. 45b and 46a; *Shawwā*, T.-S. 20.76, l. 4 (name of the proprietor of a ship in Tunisia; cf. in detail Ma'ālim al-Qurba, Arabic Text 92); *ashshī*, Brit. Mus. Or. 5566 c, l. 25, publ. J. Braslawsky, *Our Country*, Tel-Aviv, 1954, p. 77 (his daughter receives alms); *ṭabbākh* often, e.g., T.-S. Box K 15, f. 14 I, l. 8 (one from Baghdad, pays reduced poll tax); K 15, f. 50 C II, l. 18 (receives two loaves). Oxford e 98, f. 68 (14th century; meaning here perhaps butcher). In Ibn 'Abdūn (see preceding Note), p. 242, the *ṭabbākh* is a caterer at weddings, in Ma'ālim al-Qurba, p. 102, he prepares cooked meat, as

The Geniza records discern between butcher, meat-seller, meat-carver and slaughterer, from whom the slaughterer of goats is again differentiated—a specialization brought into relief by the repeated warnings of a handbook of market supervision not to mix beef or mutton with the meat of goats ¹). Sausages, called in (Jewish) Aramaic and in Arabic *naqāniq*, which is Semitized Latin *Lucanica*, i.e. coming from Lucania in Southern Italy, are mentioned in the Talmud and in Muslim literature, but not in the Geniza. Perhaps the *ḥarrād*, the processor and seller of intestines, occupied himself with their production. The sausage makers also formed a separate group ²).

There were so many types of sweetmeats that even a very elaborate handbook on market supervision had difficulty in encompassing all the specialists handling them and the techniques required in their preparation ³). The *ḡalabānī*, the preparer of a pancake made of unleavened dough, honey, almonds and other ingredients, was particularly popular and we even find a scholar engaged in this occupation ⁴). Another popular sweetmeat, the *qaṭāʾif*, was likewise made of flour and almonds ⁵).

opposed to the “roaster”, see above. *Bawāridī*, literally “maker of cooling or cold vegetables”, cf. Dozy, *Supplément I*, 68b, and Maʿālim al-Qurba, p. 96. T.-S. 13 J 18, f. 29 (a letter addressed to Mr. B. in Alexandria). *Kāmukhī* (vowelled thus and not *kāmakhī*), very common family name of at least two clans, one being Kōhens, one not, e.g., T.-S. Box K 15, f. 70, publ. MJ II, p. 247 (11th century); K 15, f. 50 C II 17 and D II 14 (12th century); K 15, f. 36, verso l. 9 (13th century).

1) Butcher: *jaḡḡār* very frequent, e.g., T.-S. 20.175 verso, l. 21 (rather odd: “near the butcher’s shop in Old Cairo”). Box K 15, f. 13 I (renting a store belonging to the community 1183/41 A.D.); ib., f. 34 (a contributor); T.-S. N.S. 173, l. 11, publ. D. H. Baneth, *Tarbiz* 30, p. 174 (Family name of a bibliophile). Meat-seller: *laḥḥām*, T.-S. 13 J 19, f. 30 (mentioned in letter); K 15, f. 36 verso 15 (contributor). Slaughterer: *dhabbāḥ*, T.-S. 13 J 22, f. 2 (a respectable Kohen); Box K 15, f. 96 *dhabbāḥ al-māʾiḡ* (slaughter of goats); meat-carver: *qaṣṣāb*, T.-S. 24.14 (financial transaction in 1122 A.D.). For the separation of goat’s flesh cf. Maʿālim al-Qurba, chapters 15 and 20.

2) Cf. Siegmund Fraenkel, *Die Aramaeischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, Leiden 1886, p. 38: *nuqāniqā*. Sausage makers: Maʿālim al-Qurba, chapter 14. For *ḥarrād* cf. J. Theol. Seminary, New York, E. N. Adler Coll. 154(2558), a person in Alexandria. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément I*, p. 268b.

3) Maʿālim al-Qurba, Ar. Text, p. 113.

4) “The Ḥavēr from Bagdad”, the *ḡalabānī*, T.-S. 13 J 21, f. 17, verso, l. 5-6. publ. *Tarbiz* 27 (1958), p. 533. Maʿālim, p. 112.

5) Cf. S. D. Goitein in JQR 49 (1958), p. 37, note 5.

The *lawwāẓīn*, men processing or selling almonds, appear frequently in the Geniza, and a street in Old Cairo was named after them¹). The “fryer”, *qālī*, it seems, prepared the various fried seeds which people used to nibble²).

The secret of artificial ice was not yet known in those days. However, ice and snow were imported from the mountains of Palestine and Syria into Egypt and kept in subterranean receptacles for the hot summer days, when they were sold for extravagant prices. Thus, the *thallāj*, or “ice man”, was a merchant with much capital and not a manufacturer³).

The vast industries connected with oil, wine, honey, sugar, dairy farming and fisheries must be treated separately and the same applies to the very much ramified transport business.

1) T.-S. 16.79, publ. by Isr. Abrams, JQR 17, p. 428 (possessor of a house), Box K 15, f. 66, verso II, l. 2 (payment of poll tax); T.-S. 10 J 15, f. 4 [N 66], l. 11 (family name of a Muslim merchant).

2) T.-S. Box K 15, f. 47 (family tree of Ben Qālī).

3) T.-S. 16.272, verso, ll. 9 and 15: *Ben Al-Thallāj*, a community leader in Alexandria, at the time of Saladin. About the enormous sums spent on ice, cf. A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Heidelberg, 1922, pp. 381 and 408, and S. D. Goitein, *Journal of World History* 3 (1957), p. 602 (10 000 dirhams for one pound).



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SLAVES AND SLAVEGIRLS IN THE CAIRO GENIZA RECORDS*

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

IN order to be able to understand the economic role and the social position of the slaves in the society reflected in the Geniza records, we must free ourselves entirely of the notions familiar to us from our readings about life on American plantations or in ancient Greece or Rome. Slavery in the period under consideration was neither industrial nor agricultural; with the exception of the armies, which were largely composed of mercenaries, who were legally slaves, it was not collective, but individual. It was a personal service in the widest sense of the word, which, when the master served was of high rank or wealthy, carried with it great economic advantages, as well as social prestige.

* *Bibliographical note.* About the Cairo Geniza documents in general cf. S. D. GOITEIN, *l'état actuel de la recherche sur les documents de la Geniza du Caire*, dans *Revue des Études Juives*, I (CXVIII), 1960, pp. 9-27. Id., *The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History*, in *JAOS* 80, 1960, pp. 91-100.

The manuscripts are quoted according to the towns and collections, in which they are preserved, and the signs used by the latter. Note the following abbreviations :

T.-S. : Taylor-Schechter Collection, preserved in the University Library, Cambridge, England.

ULCambridge : Other collections of Geniza papers in the same library. Oxford : Bodleian Library, Oxford, ms. Heb.

MJ : Jacob MANN, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs*, Oxford, 1920-22.

MT : Jacob MANN, *Texts and Studies* I, Philadelphia, 1931.

India Book : *A collection of Geniza documents on the India trade*, prepared by the present writer for publication.

Med. Soc. : "*Mediterranean Society in the High Middle Ages, based on Records from the Cairo Geniza*", a volume in preparation by the present writer. The article printed above corresponds to Section 7 of Chapter II of this book. *Mediterranean Reader, Selected Documents from the Cairo Geniza* : another publication in preparation by the writer.

N : *Geniza records* connected with Nahray ben Nissīm, a Qayrawanese merchant, scholar and public figure, who emigrated to Egypt and Palestine and lived in those countries between 1048 and 1098. Prepared for publication by Mr. M. MICHAEL.

ATS : S. ASSAF, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History*, Jerusalem, 1946.

In a famous passage in his *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith says: "It appears . . . from the experience of all ages and nations . . . that the work done by free men comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves"¹. In this general form, this statement does not hold true and has been refuted by competent historians. It certainly does not apply to the period of early Islām, when an abundant supply of captives was available in the wake of the incessant wars of conquest, so that free labor could be replaced by the cheaper work of slaves. As is well known, the ninth century, the third of Islām, witnessed a tremendous revolt of masses of negro slaves in southern Iraq, which shook the very foundations of the caliphate of Baḡdād, and, somewhat later, the council of a comparatively small Carmathian community in Eastern Arabia owned a labor force of tens of thousands of negroes doing agricultural work.

However, in the Mediterranean area during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries the situation was different. Slaves had to be imported from far away countries and were expensive. If we disregard the armies, slaves certainly formed only a minority of the population, unlike the situation in imperial Rome, where three quarters of the inhabitants were either slaves or freedmen². His high value protected the slave and made him an object of consideration, in addition to the humanitarian laws and admonitions made in his favour by the three monotheistic religions.

The very word "slave" *‘abd*, was felt as being improper and was replaced by circumscriptions such as "boy" and "young man"³.

1. Quoted by Charles VERLINDEN, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, t. I, p. 42, Brugge, 1955. This book contains a chapter about the legal and economic position of slaves in Islam, pp. 227-239, which is now largely superseded by the extensive article *‘Abd* in *E.I.*, second edition, by R. BRUNSCHVIG. The best account about the real conditions is found in A. MEZ, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Ch. XI, where, however, no sufficient distinction is made between the various social and geographical milieus. For slavery in the Jewish community during our period cf. S. W. BARON, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, t. IV, pp. 187-196 (mainly in Europe), and, in particular, S. ASSAF, *Be’ohole Ya’aqov*, 1934, pp. 223-256, and A.T.S., pp. 166-170.

2. J. CARCOPINO, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, Ch. III 2, p. 68.

3. The word *‘abd* seems to have become already in Geniza times a racial term for black people and even in this meaning it is rare, cf. 12. 582, Tarbiz, 21 (1950), p. 187; T.-S., 13 J 22, f. 33 (*India Book*, p. 84), verso, 1. 11. For "boy" and "young man" exceptionally *ḥaddām*, "servant of a higher grade", is used, see below *e.g.*, p. 4, note 2.

As the same words were applied to free employees, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a person referred to in a Geniza letter was a slave or not, in particular in the case of persons serving as business agents. The situation is still more complicated by the fact that a freedman too might be called "young man of So and So", even if his former proprietor had died long before ¹. Slaves engaged mainly in household work were called *waṣīf*, "servant", a word, it seems, restricted to unfree persons. Female slaves, too, were never designated with the Arabic term having this meaning, but by "girl". As this word, too, became almost synonymous with slave, it was in its turn often replaced by *waṣīfa*, "servant". Female slaves, as a rule, bore proper names indicative of their social station, while male slaves, especially when they were business representatives, often had names which were also in use among the free population.

In general, the situation of male slaves was essentially different from that of the females. In Islamic times, the Middle East had become accustomed to being governed by slaves. The rulers, always distrustful of their own people, used to surround themselves with persons brought from distant regions, who knew no other attachment except to their masters, but who very often became the masters of their masters. Immediately before the Fāṭimid conquest, Egypt was ruled by a black eunuch, an extremely capable man; the Fāṭimids and Ayyūbids made copious use of European, Turkish and other slaves for the highest posts of confidence, and, under their successors, the Mamlūks, what had been a practice became a principle: The ruling oligarchy admitted to its ranks solely persons who had been slaves.

On a small scale, we find a similar situation in the life of the bourgeoisie reflected in the Geniza records. Male slaves were mainly employed in positions of trust. Rarely we read about male menials, as when a man, on deathbed, after having distributed his possessions, orders the sale of his riding beast and his *waṣīf* (in this order) in order to pay the burial expenses with their price ². The acquisition of a male slave was a great affair, on which a man was congratulated almost as if a son had been born to him. No wonder,

1. *E.g.* T.-S., 12. 175, ll. 23-27. For "boy" and "young man" as designations for free employees, cf. *Mediterranean Society*, Ch. II, Section 3.

2. Oxford, f. 56 (Catal. 2821), f. 12, verso, 1. 6.

for a slave fulfilled tasks similar to those of a son¹. He managed the affairs of his master, he travelled with him or for him or he was in charge of his master's business, when the latter himself was out of town. The "*ḡulām*", or "young man", of a business man would be consulted in all affairs of his master, and his movements would be reported in the same way as those of other important merchants. "Muslim acquaintances who arrived from Ascalon", writes a Palestinian living in Bilbis on the caravan route between Palestine and Cairo", told me that Abū l-Munā, the *ḡulām* of our lord (the head of the Jews in the Fāṭimid empire) has arrived in Ascalon". Similar statements are met with frequently².

The following account well exemplifies the dualism in the social position of a *ḡulām*. Its scene was 'Ayḏāb, the great port on the East-African coast, which served as the terminal for ships coming from China, India and South Arabia. In December 1141, there arrived among the Jewish merchants from Egypt and the Maḡrib Ṣāfi, "the pure, sincere", the slave and agent of the head of the Jewish academy in Old Cairo, and one Ibn Ġamāhir, a notable, well known to us as a trouble-maker from other papers relevant to the India trade. Ṣāfi insulted the notable in the presence of Muslim fellow merchants, accusing him of having disposed of a slave girl, after having had a child by her, in Berbera on the African coast. Ibn Ġamāhir filed a complaint of slander against his adversary with the governor of the town. The governor, well aware of the special status of Ṣāfi, tried to consult the Jewish merchants staying in the town, most of whom, however, disregarded his invitation. After Ibn Ġamāhir's Muslim friends had given witness, the governor ordered Ṣāfi to be flogged. "What!" exclaimed Ṣāfi, "I, the *ḡulām* of the Head of the Academy, should be flogged?" However, his protest was of no avail, he was flogged and jailed. One of the Jewish merchants from the Maḡrib intervened, and Ṣāfi was set free—"not without loss of money", whether for himself or his liberator, is not stated. The document, from which we learn about

1. *Congratulation on the acquisition of a slave*: GOTTHEIL-WORRELL, n° IX, line 32, p. 50. The phrase *Allah yarzuquka miṯlahu kaṭīr*, "may God give you many like him", is used for the birth of a son.

2. Oxford, a 3 (Catal. 2873), f. 13, l. 17 from al-Qayrawān; b. 13, f. 50 (Catal. 2834, n° 31) verso margin, from Bilbis; d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 15 verso ll. 8-10, T.-S., 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 18 and 21. Often in N., e.g. n° 129, l. 12, n° 131, verso l. 1, and n° 148. "The *ḥaddām*, servant, of Ibn Sigmār is also leaving", UL Cambridge, 1081 J 24, l. 14.

all this, was written, of course, because the affair was to have a legal aftermath before the Jewish court in Old Cairo¹.

The agents who were legally slaves were allowed to do business on their own account, and some must have done very well. One document shows Durri, "the pearl-like", the *ġulām* of a Nagid, making one of the largest contributions to a public appeal, comparable to those of upper middle class people. In another document, dated 1161, a *ġulām* (also bearing the name Šāfi) gives two dinars to the widow of the partner of his master, while "the young man" of the taxfarmer of the market of Palermo contracted in 1063 a partnership with a Jewish merchant which involved very high sums². One *ġulām*, called Ṭāhir (also meaning "pure"), was even the proprietor of a boat³. Sometimes, a master would do a service for his own servant, as when a Tunisian merchant ordered old silver for himself and also for his *ġulām* Ġurġ (the same word as modern George)—for the latter, to the not inconsiderable amount of twenty seven dinars⁴.

While deeds of sale, gift or bequest of slavegirls have been found in very considerable number among the Geniza record, only one such document has come so far to the knowledge of this writer with regard to adult males (there are some for minors). So far only one deed of manumission of an adult male slave has been found (as against, at least, six, for females), while the emancipation of slaves must have been extremely common—as we may conclude from the fact that freedmen are mentioned so often. It should be noted that the act of manumission had to be made before a Jewish Court, for it converted the slave into a person with all the religious duties of a Jew and enabled him to marry a Jewish wife. The scarcity of legal deeds with regard to adult male slaves—as opposed to the frequent reference to them in letters—might

1. T.-S., 12. 582, publ. S. D. GOITEIN, *Tarbiz*, 21 (1950), pp. 185-191. The document is unsigned and the space for inserting the year was left free, as was the custom with unsigned documents. However, since the other dates given require that the first of the Jewish month Tebeth fell in that year on a Monday, it must have been 1141, for between 1115 and 1167 there was no other coincidence like this, and the other persons mentioned in the document are known to have been active during these years.

2. DURRĪ; cf. *Mediterranean Society*, Ch. II, Section 1, note 11. ŠĀFĪ : d 66 (Catal. 2878), f. 78, by the way, a name also borne by free men. 'Abd Allah *ġulām šāhib al-sūq* : Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 389, verso, l. 40.

3. Oxford, a 2 (2805) f. 19, l. 13; *qārib Ṭāhir ġulām Ibn al-Tabbār*.

4. T.-S., 13 J 28, f. 2, l. 28. The *u* in Ġurġ is not indicated in the original.

partly have had its cause in the fact that, as a rule, they were owned only by members of the upper class, and, for reasons explained in *Mediterranean Society*, Chapter VI, the latter is not fully represented in the Geniza records. It is also possible that there were certain restrictions with regard to transactions in adult male slaves, which necessitated that they should be made before a Muslim court.

Slavegirls as domestic help and nurses of children were found in every well-to-do family. With regard to their position, there was, of course, a deep cleavage between the Christian and Jewish minorities on the one hand and the Muslim majority on the other. While Christianity and Judaism disapproved of any sexual relations outside wedlock, in Islam a female slave was at the disposal of her master, and he could possess as many of them as he liked and his purse allowed. We should not judge too harshly about this institution. In a polygamous society, it had certain advantages—for all parties concerned—over polygamy itself. The present writer was much impressed, when he read how al-Ġabartī, an excellent Muslim historian (writing in the early decades of the nineteenth century) praised his old mother for buying a beautiful slavegirl for his father with her own money; he regarded this as an act of particular piety. It was the Judaeo-Christian attitude which appeared to a keen Muslim observer as strange and abnormal¹. Judaism, in particular, regarded intercourse with a slave girl as a very great sin, punishable, according to some authorities with death, to be inflicted by zealots (based on the story in the book of Numbers 25: 6-12). A man was not allowed to be under one roof with a female slave, unless his mother, sister or wife lived in the same house. Transgressions were punished by forced sale of the slave, the price to be distributed among the poor, or by outright excommunication².

It is only natural that the social habits of a majority should affect minorities living among it and the state of utmost dependence, in which slavegirls were found, constituted in itself a great temptation. The attractive slave was the easy prey of her master's lust also in Roman Christian society³. No wonder that we

1. PSEUDO AL-MUQADDASĪ, *Le Livre de la création*, ed. HUART, t. IV, pp. 38 and 46, quoted by A. MEZ, *Renaissance des Islams*, p. 152.

2. Cf. the article by ASSAF quoted above, p. 2, note 1.

3. SAMUEL DILL, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, Meridian Library, p. 129.

find occasional references to such occurrences also in the Geniza records.

We have already heard about the India merchant who was accused of having kept a slave concubine and having had a child by her. In another Geniza letter we read about a married man with children who forsook his family in his native Alexandria, acquired a European slavegirl in Old Cairo, bought her beautiful dresses, the like of which his wife had never had, and made off with her to the far away Fayyūm province¹. There are a few queries and references to similar cases², but it is evident that, in this respect, the society reflected in the Geniza records differed markedly from that of the Jews in Spain during the thirteenth century, when slave concubinage became a blatant social evil.

One differentiated between domestics for personal service, those doing household work in general, and nurses³. A respectable merchant in Alexandria, whose wife had died recently, writes to his friend in Old Cairo that he had none to serve him and "to hand a cup of water" to his children or to himself. No help could be found in the Jewish quarter of his town; therefore, he asked the addressee to buy him a chaste slave woman, who would be able to take care of the children⁴. We find a similar request made by another Alexandrian in a letter to his brother in Old Cairo and by a man in the latter town writing to his father on travel in one of the countries of the Indian Ocean⁵. In a better house there would be a *dāda* (cf. English *dad* for father), or nurse, for the children, and a *waṣīfa*, who did the rougher work. A woman on her deathbed forbids to sell the Sudanese *dāda* and her little son, because her own little daughter was so fond of them, and, in order to emphasize her will, even pronounces a curse on any one who would dare to sell

1. T.-S. 10 K 8, f. 13, publ. A.T.S., p. 167; transl. in *Mediterranean Reader*.

2. E.g. British Museum Or., 10 652 (*Gaster Coll.* 1638), f. 2, JQR, 51 (1960), pp. 34-46; Budapest, *David Kaufmann Collection*, XXV; UL Cambridge Or., 1080 J 281. It is almost sure that the two later queries, which are addressed to Abraham Maïmonides as the one quoted in the previous note, refer to the same cases.

3. Cf. the source quoted above, note 1, and below, note 5.

4. T.-S., 12. 254 (N 102), margin and top.

5. T.-S., N.S., 94 J 16; Ms. David Sassoon 713, *Sassoon Library*, Letchworth, England, publ. by J. M. TOLEDANO, in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 4 (1927), p. 451, and H. Z. HIRSCHBERG, *Baer Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1961, p. 143. In the first case, *waṣīfa*, in the latter, *ḡāriya* is used.

them¹. It is, however, not impossible that humane and proselytizing tendencies were also active in the acquisition and upbringing of slavegirls. Thus, the wife of a scholar and judge frees on her deathbed her two slaves, who were virgins, and, it seems, mere children, and provides them with housing and board for life on condition they remained inside the Jewish fold². One of the girls, called *Dahab*, "Gold", was given by a widow to her brother a few years earlier, when she was only three years old³.

The religious position of slaves is a very interesting topic. In this respect, the three monotheistic religions varied widely. In Judaism, both male and female slaves were obliged to adopt a milder form of religious observances, including, however, the full keeping of the sabbath rest (which they might not have disliked). As other proselytes, they were initiated by baptism. According to the law, if a slave refused to be baptized within one year, he had to be resold. Thus far, no reference to the working of this law has been found in the Geniza records.

As to the provenance and price of slaves, naturally we learn little about males, since only few deeds concerning them have been found in the Geniza. As to girls, negroes were rarely employed. Thus far, only one has been ascertained, called "Musk", see below p. 12. We have already read about the Sudanese *dāda*, or nurse, and another Sudanese, worth nominally thirty gold pieces, in fact, most probably, only fifteen, was given to the daughter of her mistress as part of her marriage portion⁴. The race mostly favoured for household service was the Nubian. The Nubian "Salt" (denoting wittiness and grace) was sold in 1084 for 15 dinars, and another girl from the same provenance, named "Pleasure", was acquired by a widow for 20 dinars in 1108⁵. "Dexterity", the Nubian, was sold, together with her little daughter, in 1094 in Old Cairo to a Mr. Joseph ben Solomon Kohen for 28 dinars, and again in 1105, this time alone and in Cairo, by two brothers, sons of a

1. Jewish Theol. Seminary, New York, *Geniza Misc.*, 6. Transl. in *Mediterranean Reader*.

2. T.-S., 13 J 22, f. 2. Transl. in *Medit. Reader*.

3. T.-S., 12. 140 (Dated 1145). At the age of three, she was already called *waṣīfa*.

4. Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 341 (around 1070). The word used is *kūṣiyyā* (Aramaic).

5. *Milḥ* and *Na'im* : T.-S., 18 J 1, ff. 12 and 17, cf. N. GOIB, *Jewish Social Studies*, 20 (1958), p. 28, note 70.

Mr. Moses Kohen, a high government official, to their sister for 20 dinars. If indeed the same person is meant, "Dexterity" must have changed hands between 1094 and 1105, most probably inside the same family¹. "Arsenic"—possibly called so because of her light, silvery-white complexion—the Nubian, was given, in 1134 by as husband to his wife in exchange for the girl she had brought in a part of her marriage portion. Another slave by the same name was presented by a father to his two daughters as a gift in 1182².

Next to Nubians, we hear mostly of European slave-girls. In 1070, a woman bearing the proud name *Sitt al-Rūm*, Queen of the Rūm, who had been freed by her master before his death, appeared in person before the rabbinical court of Alexandria to appoint an attorney, for what, unfortunately, we do not know, since the major part of the document concerned is lost³. In 1110, "Steadiness", "from the land of Greece", was emancipated by a physician⁴. At approximately the same time, we read in a letter information given about a "Frankish" girl⁵. The "Christian" slave girls, mentioned above as illegal concubines, also must have been Europeans, as no local citizens could be reduced to slavery⁶.

A third group of slavegirls frequently referred to were those born in slavery. It is, however, not evident, through the prices mentioned or otherwise, that those were preferred to others⁷. The lowest price, encountered thus far in a Geniza document for a slavegirl, was obtained by the Persian "Perfume". However, no general conclusions should be drawn from this instance⁸.

Mothers were normally sold together with their children, even when the latter had attained an age when they were able, according to the notions of that period, to do service. Thus, "Peacock" was sold in 1241 together with her son "The Blessed" for 40 dinars,

1. *Hiḏq* : T.-S., 20. 93 B and 16. 188.

2. *Rahāḡ* : T.-S., 13 J 2, f. 20, and Oxford, f. 56 (Catal. 2821), f. 46a. For another Nubian cf. below, p. 11, note 2.

3. T.-S., 12. 8. A similar name for a slavegirl was *Sitt al-Sumr* "Queen of the Dark Brown", most probably a Nubian, T.-S., 13 J 22, f. 2.

4. *Ṭabāt* : T.-S., 8 J 12, f. 1. Greece : *Yāwān* (Hebrew).

5. Budapest, *David Kaufmann Coll.*, XIX, verso, l. 5.

6. Cf. p. 7, notes 1 and 2.

7. Called *muwallada*, e.g., T.-S., 10 J 11, f. 31; 12. 140; 13 J 4, f. 2; J. Theol. Sem., New York, *Adler Coll.*, 4020 I (dated 1091), l. 11. This n° 4020 I is different from 4020, quoted below, p. 11, note 1.

8. *ʿAbīr* was sold for 10½ dinars, which sum included brokerage and sale's tax, T.-S., 8 J 8, f. 4.

although the latter was about ten years old¹. The same price is given for a maidservant and her son "Happiness", both forming part of a marriage portion in an incomplete document². We have already seen that in 1094 "Dexterity" was accompanied by a child, but in 1105 she was not. "Lucky fellow", an Abyssinian, was sold for 10¼ dinars, when he was still a minor, but he was brought to Egypt as a child, not separated from his mother, while in slavery³. However, in a will, a woman states that the child of her maidservant, who had been given to her by her mother, belonged to the latter, who, by the way, lived with her in the same house. The old mother of the dying woman intended perhaps to bring up the little girl in the Jewish faith as an act of piety⁴. We had a similar case before. In one document, the diary of a famous judge, two years old "Fidelity" remained in the possession of the seller of her mother "Darling", who herself was born as a slave. Since the buyer paid only two out of the price of thirty four dinars, while he was supposed to pay the rest in monthly installments during two and a half years, perhaps buyer and seller lived next door to each other. In any case, the separation of mothers and minor children was illegal⁵.

The general steadiness of prices characteristic for our period applies also to slavegirls. The standard price was twenty dinars. We had already some examples and many more could be adduced. "Wild Rose" was sold for this price in 1148. An unnamed servant accompanied her mistress to her new home forty years later, the marriage contract stating expressly that twenty dinars was the *real* price⁶. In an eleventh century marriage contract, "Prodigality" is estimated as worth 40 dinars. But her name should not deceive us. It was customary, for the greater glory of the bride, to list in her marriage contract sums twice as high as they really

1. *Ṭāʾūs* and *Mubārak* : T.-S., 16. 20.

2. *Saʿd* : British Museum, Or. 10 653 (*Gaster Collection*), f. 5.

3. *Muqbil* : T.-S., 13 J 8, f. 3, dated 1152, including brokerage, sale's tax and customs duties, which shows that he was "imported". *Muqbil* is known as the name of a slave from the letters of Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, cf. A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, p. 161, and as that of a free (not freed) man from the Geniza, e.g., T.-S., 12. 825.

4. T.-S., 13 J 3, f. 3, l. 13. Translated in *Medit. Reader*, cf. above p. 8.

5. *Wafāʾ* and *Ġanān* : GOTTHEIL-WORRELL, XLV verso, pp. 222-225 (dated 1141-2).

6. *Nisrīn* : 13 J 3, f. 7. Real price twenty dinars : Oxford, f. 56 (Catal. 2821) f. 42, verso, l. 11.

were. "Success" and again "Brightness" were sold for twenty dinars, the latter in 1226¹. Naturally, there were exceptions. We find slavegirls sold for 25, 23, 22, 21, 18, 17, 15, (three cases; one was called "Queen of the Lovers"), 12, and even 10½ dinars². Other prices have appeared above. However, the exceptionally high price of 34 dinars for "Darling", mentioned in the preceding paragraph was, at least partly, due to the fact that the buyer did not pay in cash.

Thus far, the evidence provided by our documents does not allow us to make any statement as to the frequency with which slaves changed hands. For even where deeds refer to the same names within a lifetime, it is by no means sure that these names, strange and unusual as they may appear to us, belonged to the same person. We already had two occurrences of Šāfi, "Gold", "Dexterity", "Pleasure" and ʿlm respectively, and we also find "Musk" and "Success" at least twice and "Happiness" three times³. A "Fidelity" was set free in January 1181 by three sisters whose property she was⁴. If she was identical with "Fidelity" who was two years old in 1141-2 (cf. above p. 10), she had changed hands at least once during this period of forty years. Only in one case, thus far, we are able to state with certainty that a slavegirl was sold by her buyer within a few months after he had purchased her, for the second sale and its date are entered on the reverse side of the deed describing the first⁵. An occurrence like this is easily

1. *Saraf* : T.-S., 12.635. *Tawfiq* : J. Theol. Sem., New York, *Adler Coll.*, 4020, f. 11, *Ḍiyāʾ* : T.-S., 13 J 4, f. 2.

2. Slavegirl sold for 25 dinars : "Secrecy", *Kitmān*, in 1091, J. Theol. Sem., *Adler Coll.*, 4020 I ; for 23 dinars : the Nubian ʿlm (ʿ*Alam*, "Flag", or ʿ*ilm*, "Knowledge" ?), T.-S., 20.41 (dated 1137); for 22 or 21 dinars : cf. GOLB, *Jewish Social Studies*, 20 (1958), p. 28, note 70 ; another maidservant for 21 dinars : Oxford, c 28 (Catal. 2876), f. 1, Cairo, 1207; for 18 dinars : T.-S., 13 J 37, f. 12 ("Musk", 1164-5); for 17 d. : 10 J 11, f. 31, also called ʿlm ; for 15 d. : see GOLB, above ; 13 J 6, f. 7 (ʿ*Uššāq*, which, as other female names in the plural, is an abbreviation, namely of *Sitt al-ʿUššāq* ; she was pregnant) ; above p. 8, and note 4 ; for 12 *maṭāqīl* in 1198 : 13 J 3, f. 16 ; for 10½ dinars : see p. 9, note 8.

3. *Saʿāda*, the Nubian *dāda*, cf. above p. 7; T.-S., 18 J 1, f. 30 (dated 1190, cf. GOLB, *Jewish Social Studies*, 20, p. 28, note 70) ; T.-S., 13 J 3, f. 16 (dated 1198). Nos 2 and 3 are hardly identical, as the price in the first case was 22 dinars and in the second 12 *miṭqāls*. In addition, different persons were involved in the two transactions.

4. T.-S., 8 J 12, f. 13.

5. T.-S. 13 J 37, f. 12. The date of the first sale is torn away, but was 1164-5, since it was made under the authority of the Nāsi Daniel, who was

explained. One of the usual conditions of a marriage contract stipulated that no husband was permitted to retain a maid servant whom his wife disliked. Thus the quick resale of "Musk"—this was the name of the girl concerned—might have had its reason in the fact that she did not get along well with her new mistress.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that none of the persons involved in the transactions mentioned had anything to do with slave trade. The first proprietor of "Musk" was a perfumer, the second a wax maker and the third a housewife. The same holds true of all other Geniza documents dealing with the subject. The present writer can only confirm the opinion expressed by Mr. David Neustad (now: Ayalon) a quarter of a century ago, that, during the classical Geniza period, the Jews had no share in the slave trade whatsoever ¹.

Although all transactions in slaves mentioned in our papers were made between private persons, who most probably knew each other personally, the contracts usually mention a commission to be paid by the purchaser to a broker, as well as a sale's tax, literally "dues of the market". Most probably, this procedure was not only a matter of precaution (one wanted the slave to be valued by an expert), but an official injunction, in order to make an evasion of the sale's tax impossible ². The purchaser undertakes to acquiesce in all defects the slave might have, who under no circumstances might be returned—conditions summarized with the formula "like the sale of imported slaves" ³. In some contracts it is stated that the slave had lived for some time in the house of her future proprietor (mostly in case the latter was a lady), who had become well acquainted with all her apparent or hidden imperfections ⁴.

A student of Muslim (or Jewish) law books is inclined to ridicule the amount of casuistry and hairsplitting devoted to the problem of a slave belonging to more than one master, or being partly a

in office in these years, cf. MJ, I, p. 175. The second sale was made in June 1165. The price of the girl was 18 dinars at the first sale; the price at the second sale is not preserved.

1. *Economic Life of the Jews in Egypt during the Middle Ages*, ZION, 2 (1937), pp. 225-6 (in Hebrew).

2. *Rasm, haqq, or wāḡib al-sūq*, e.g., T.-S., 13 J 3, f. 7 (1148); 13 J 3, f. 16 (1198). (*Ḡu'ī*) *al-dalāla*, *ibid.*

3. *Bay' al-Ḡalab*, 13 J 3, f. 7 and often, even in midst of Aramaic formulas, as in JTS, *Adler Collection*, 4020 I (1091 A. D.), l. 14.

4. E.g., 13 J 6, f. 7.

slave and partly free. However, the Geniza documents and the contemporaneous *Responsa*¹ prove that occurrences like these must have been indeed extremely frequent. We had above the cases of a slave freed by three sisters, another sold by two brothers, and a third given by a father as a joint gift to his two daughters. The following story is characteristic: one half of the rights on a black slave called "Musk", which rights a man had inherited from his deceased wife, were given by him to his married son, while the latter's wife, who was also his cousin, was given the other half by her mother, who had inherited these rights from her father. Thus, "Musk" had remained in one family for three generations, but had been legally the property of two different persons for an extended period. From some indications in the deed concerned, it may be concluded that the two married sisters had lived in one house and actually shared the services of the family domestic². It is natural, however, that things did not always go as smoothly as in the cases mentioned above. In a query addressed to Abraham Maimonides (in office 1205-1237) we find indeed an extremely complicated lawsuit between two sisters concerning a slavegirl, which was temporarily solved by the decision that she should serve one sister one month and one the other. The slave obviously did not consent to a decision which gave her in part to a mistress, who, according to the details mentioned, had no rights to her. After three days, she appeared before a Muslim court, alleged that the new part-time mistress had beaten her and embraced Islam. This, of course, had the consequence that the two rivalling sisters had to sell her³.

The incidence just mentioned shows that a slave was not a mere object, but a person with rights and a will to take her fate into her own hands. Therefore, deeds of sale state expressly that the slave recognized the right of proprietorship of her master or mistress. In a will, made around 1100, the testator, who left a wife and a minor daughter, stipulates that the maidservant should

1. The legal opinions or answers of Jewish religious authorities to queries addressed to them, comparable to the Muslim *Fatāwī*, cf. Solomon B. FREEHOF, *The Responsa Literature*, Philadelphia 1957.

2. T.-S., N. S., 94 J 32. A most intricate case of a partly free slave—facts stranger than fiction—is to be found in *Moses ben Maimon Responsa*, ed. J. BLAU, Jerusalem, 1957, pp. 178-182; cf. S. D. GOITEIN, *Maimonides as Chief Justice*, in *JQR*, 49 (1959), pp. 191-204.

3. *Abraham Maimunis Responsa*, ed. A. H. FREIMANN, Jerusalem, 1937, pp. 149-153.

never be sold, *except she herself wished so*. Clearly the man wanted to retain the help of a faithful servant for his little family, but intended to leave her freedom of choice ¹.

In the family quarrels about the possession of a slavegirl, the latter did not remain neutral. "I suspend the litigation", writes a mother from Alexandria to her son in Old Cairo, "until you report to me the legal opinion of the Rayyis (presumably a judge or the Nagid himself). Meanwhile, the slavegirl "Success" went to the wife of your maternal uncle, "your aunt has alienated her from me, until she went over to her" ². We read above about a slavegirl getting rid of an undesirable mistress by embracing Islam. The opposite case is reported in a letter concerning a girl who had been regarded as being a Muslim and when she appeared before the Qadi, declared she was Jewish, whereupon her case was turned over by the latter to a Jewish judge for further investigation ³. When, in a period of famine, a family intended to sell the maid-servant, she declared that she did not agree to be sold ⁴.

With this, we have come to the great question of the treatment of slaves. One is tempted to quote the paragraph with which Maimonides concludes the chapter on slavery in his code of law: "It is both pious and reasonable on the part of a master to be merciful and just towards his slave, not to overburden him with work and not to cause him grief, and to let him share all food and drink taken by himself . . . He should not humiliate him either by infliction of corporal punishment or even by words . . . He should not shout at him . . . but talk to him quietly and listen to his arguments . . .". Similar admonitions could be quoted from Christian and Muslim sources. But, of course, not all people were pious and reasonable. As far as our actual information from the Geniza records is concerned, the male slaves, who normally acted as business representatives, are referred to in the same way as respectable merchants and, in case they served also as personal factotums, were greeted in letters as other members of the house-

1. T.-S., 20.41; cf. p. 11, note 2 : *tuqirr li bi-l-'ubūdiyya*. The same formula already in Aramaic ; *mešadqaṭ le'abdū*, J. Theol. Sem., New York, *Adler Coll.*, 4020 I (1091 A. D.) ; The will which leaves the choice to the maid-servant.

2. Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 400, ll. 13-16 : *wā-qad rāḥat al-ḡāriya Tawfiq ilā 'mra'at ḥālīka aṣadathā ḥattā rāḥat ilayhā*.

3. UL Cambridge Or., 1080 J 30 (*India book*, 171).

4. Using "the plural of modesty" : *lā nubā' li-aḥad*, T.-S., 13 J 36, f. 11.

hold, sometimes with the honorable epithet "the elder"¹. When we have found above pp. 4-5 a case where such a slave was flogged as a punishment for alleged defamation, we should not forget that in these times even viziers were exposed to such public humiliations. As we shall see in the discussion of the position of the freedmen, there existed a strong family attachment between the master and his slave.

Such attachment was even more pronounced in the case of female slaves. Naturally, no uniformity can be expected in such matters. Still, some general trends are definitely recognizable. Slavegirls were greeted in family letters and they sent greetings to the relatives of their masters². This was perhaps not common in more ancient times, for even the eccentric poet Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arri, who wrote many things which others abhorred to mention, apologizes when extending greetings to a black slave³. A merchant abroad, would be reminded by his wife to bring home a present also for the maidservant (mercifully, it was stated, what)⁴. Just as most excited congratulations were extended at the acquisition of a male slave (cf. above p. 3), thus, we read about expressions of sympathy at the death of a slavegirl. In a Geniza formulary for letters, we find a long model for a letter of condolence at such an occasion. Despite the Hebrew characters used in the formulary, we may suspect here a Muslim original, where "slavegirl" would be synonymous with concubine. However, we have also a contemporaneous poem by the most celebrated Jewish poet and saint, Judah ha-Levi, written in Alexandria, on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he apologizes to a friend for being unable, because of an eye disease, to express his sympathy in person on

1. The Indian slave Bama of the Tunisian merchant and industrialist Abraham Ben Yiğū is greeted at least in five letters. In some letters he is called "the elder" (*al-šayḥ*), although he is referred to as "your slave" (*abd*!); cf. *India book*, n^o 24.56. 57. 58/9. 60/208.

2. E.g. T.-S., 13 J 33, f. 10, verso, where the slave girl, "Turquoise", *fayrūz*, "Ambergris-perfume", *nadd*, and a third, whose name is only partly legible, are greeted, (dated November 1167). Slavegirls greeting: T.-S., 16.179; *Mediterranean Reader* n^o 13, Section H. (styled here *šabiyya*, not, as in the East, *ḡariya*). In the same letter from Tunisia "the *šabi*" kisses the ground before his master and his mistress. The same phrase is used in any letter addressed by a free man to a judge.

3. Cf. above p. 10, note 3.

4. Budapest, *David Kaufmann Coll.*, X, cf. *Mediterranean Society*, Ch. IX, Section 12.

the occasion of the demise of his slavegirl. Here, only a family domestic could be meant. Still, after an appropriate introduction, the poet has the following to say:

You miss a maid in your house,
But know that Fortune herself is your slave.
She was purchased by your silver,
But princes are bought by your deeds.
Be not too mournful. Regard her as a ransom
For your soul and the soul of all your children.
Regain your poise, abandon apprehensions,
The angels of peace themselves are at your command.

The tenor of the poem clearly indicates that the death of a maid, like that of a close relative, was regarded not only as a loss, but as an ill omen foreboding possible future disasters ¹.

A touchstone for the treatment of slaves is the frequency of reports or discussions about their running away from their masters. Thus far, only two such instances have been traced in the Geniza papers. In one, a legal document, we read that a husband, before setting out on a prolonged journey, left twenty five dinars and five *irdabbs* of wheat for his wife, her two daughters and the maid-servant. On the reverse side, the remark is added that the maid "was lost from the house", even before the master left ².

The other is a letter written in the ten sixties, when bedouins conquered the Egyptian capital, and many slavegirls took advantage of the opportunity to run away with them. The wife of a distinguished merchant, who was at that time in Alexandria on business, informs him that she suspected that their *ḡulām*, who, it seems, was in charge of their local business, would do the same ³.

Data about slaves set free by their masters are as numerous in the Geniza as the references to their running away are rare. The deeds of manumission preserved correspond to the strict requirements of Jewish law. They state that the former slave was now entirely free, with neither the master nor his legal representatives having any right on the person, progeny or property of the emancipated. The latter was at liberty to adopt a new name, to marry a person of Jewish faith and to do in general what any free person was allowed to do. Thus, legally, the position of a Jewish freedman

1. T.-S., 28.8 *li-raḡul uṣība bi-ḡāriya*. *Diwan of Judah ha-Levi*, cf. H. Brody, Berlin, 1894, I, pp. 40-41. n° 31.

2. T.-S., 12.585 (Dated 1157).

3. UL Cambridge Or., 1080 J 71, l. 13. The addressee is Judah b. Moses Ibn Sigmār, a personality very prominent in the Geniza papers of that time.

differed markedly from that of a Muslim. According to Muslim (and Roman) law, there remained many bonds between the former master and his freedman. The latter was called in Arabic *mawlā*, which means "the attached", while in Hebrew his designation was "freedman"¹.

In actual life, the Geniza shows us, relationships similar to those existing between relatives prevailed. Many marriage contracts and other documents concerning marriages of emancipated women and men have been preserved. These are often called by the name of their former masters, and it is reasonable to assume that the many objects of jewelry, clothing, bedding and household goods forming their marriage positions were, at least partly, given to them by the latter. Even in the contract made at her second marriage, Mu'tazz, "The one held in high esteem", is still referred to as "the freedwoman of Moses b. Paltiel" (most probably a member of the famous P. family); otherwise, of course, all the conditions were the same as those in regular marriage contracts, and her dowry was far higher than that of many women born free². Munā, "Wishes", the freedwoman of Ben Futaiḥ (a family known through three centuries) married in 1184 a Levi, who must have been a respectable person, for he is known from various documents as a Parnas, or guardian of orphans and the poor. Twenty years later, in 1203, when she was credited with a sum of twenty three dinars, which she had lent to a perfumer, she was still called "freedwoman" in the relevant document, while her husband bore his title Parnas³.

1. Deeds of manumission : dated May 1085, *Mahlūf*, a male slave (the name was common also among free people); Facsimile : *Jewish Encyclopedia*, t. XI, p. 405, transliteration (without translation) by A. MARX, in *JQR*, N.S., I, p. 434. Emancipation of the minor slave *Munḡib*, in T.-S., 13 J 30, f. 7. Three deeds of manumission of women, dated 1110, 1176, 1181 respectively, in T.-S., 8 J 12, ff. 1-3. The second is translated in *Mediterranean Reader*. A fourth, dated 1157, is found in 10 J 28, f. 16. A fifth, issued in Jerusalem, 1057, was published by L. BLAU, *Die juedische Ehescheidung*, t. II, p. 102. There exists at least one more. The conditions for males and females were the same. Cf. also p. 19, note 2.

2. T.-S., 16.105 (Dated 986). The masculine form of the name of the slavegirl is remarkable ; *Mu'tazz*, of course, was the name of a caliph, but has in this connection the meaning "the one held in high esteem (*by her master*)", cf. DOZY, *Supplément*, t. II, p. 123b. A free woman, divorced in Taṭay, Lower Egypt, in 1052, was called *'Aziz*, also in the masculine, cf. T.-S., 8.154. *'Aziza* is also found as name of a free woman, T.-S., Box 28, f. 249 (Jerusalem).

3. Oxford, f. 56 (Catal. 2821), 53a; c 28 (Catal. 2876), f. 54. The full name

Similar bonds of attachment existed between male slaves and the houses of their former masters. We have a moving letter from the head of the Jewish community in al-Qayrawān, Tunisia, in which he asks his opposite number in Old Cairo (shortly after 1006) to help a freedman of his deceased uncle with regard to claims on the estate of a woman (probably his sister), who had been freed by the same relative¹. In the terrible years of famine 1201/2, a slave "took his refuge with" his former proprietor, a woman, and also helped her with his own money². In a marriage contract between two emancipated slaves, the bridegroom stipulates that his future wife should live with him in the house of his former master—who, by the way, bore the same name, Abū Saʿīd ibn Ġamāhir, as the India merchant whom we have met above (p. 4) as having had an affair with a slavegirl³.

As stated above, Jewish law did not grant the emancipator any rights whatsoever on the person, progeny or property of the slave emancipated by him. Here too, however, the influence of the environment, or perhaps social habits, were stronger than the written law. The Geniza has preserved a long and interesting query addressed to Abraham Maïmonides with the following story. A freedwoman in a little town in lower Egypt had left money to her friends at her death, who however did not want to accept it, but intended to turn it over to the community. Meanwhile the son of the master, who had emancipated her (the son himself is called in the letter "her master"!), a respected and popular figure in the town, had become ruined in an affair of tax-farming and laid claim on the money. The head of the local community was very much anxious to accede to the notable's request, in particular as the latter threatened to apply to a Muslim court in case it was refused. In his hastily scribbled marginal answer, the Nagid states that, of course, the applicant had not the slightest rights on the estate of a person emancipated by his father, but there was no objection to its being turned over to him, if the woman to whom it was given consented to such a procedure—with other words, the Nagid, too,

of Munā's husband was Abū l-Faraġ Ben al-Tinnīsī, the Parnes Yešūʿa ha-Levi ben Abraham. No *Kohen* marrying a freed woman has been traced so far in the Geniza by the present writer.

1. T.-S., 12.175, translated in *Mediterranean Reader*.

2. *Abraham Maimuni Responsa*, cf. above, p. 13, note 3 (p. 149).

3. T.-S., Box K 15, f. 65 I.

favoured an action in line with the popular feeling in such matters¹. It is noteworthy, that in Tunisia (but not in the "East"), Jewish freedmen, and even their sons, were designated by the Arabic term *mawlā*, "attached to So and So" (cf. above p. 17²).

As far as we are able to discern, there were no legal inhibitions or discriminations against emancipated slaves. We see them marry free women, concluding partnerships involving considerable sums with free men and appearing as attorneys in court³. A former slave married to a free man would be asked by a court to give her consent to her husband's selling of a house, just as any other wife⁴. The emancipated slaves became imbued with the social and religious notions of the community which they joined. A characteristic instance in this respect is the will of the freedman Bundār, who assigned one fourth of his estate to the poor of his town, one fourth to the poor of the Holy City Jerusalem, "of the Rabbinite persuasion with exclusion of the Karaïtes", while the rest fell to his heirs. One fourth amounted to 139 *ṭarīs*, or Sicilian quarter dinars, by no means a negligible sum, since the Government had appropriated most of the estate left by the freedman⁵.

Was emancipation always a blessing for the person concerned? In answer to this question we can only state that the Geniza contains lists in which freed persons appear as receivers of alms and clothing from the public chest. Slaves do so also; perhaps this happened when their masters died without having set them free⁶.

1. T.-S., 8 J 16, f. 4, transl. in *Medit. Reader*.

2. *Faraḡ mawlā Barhūn*, T.-S., 8.12, almost certainly identical with the *ʿatīq*, or freedman, of the uncle of the writer of T.-S., 12.175, cf. p. 18, n. 1. *N.z.l.ly ben mawlā Šāliḥ*, T.-S., 20.76, l. 29. The name is perhaps Berber, *Naṣr mawlā ben a(l)-Zubayr*, T.-S., Box K 3, f. 36 I. All these were respectable business agents.

3. The freedman Salāma marries a free virgin in 1111, T.-S., 24.5. Bišāra concludes a partnership to the amount of 175 1/3 dinars, to which he, as agent, contributes 20d., T.-S., N.S., 94 J 6, transl. in *Medit. Reader*. Muḥtār, the freedman of the Gaon, or head of the Academy in Palestine, appears as attorney in Old Cairo, T.-S., 10 J 23, f. 1, cf. MJ II p. 363. About the extremely rare cases of a master marrying a slave freed by himself cf. *Medit. Society*, Ch. VII.

4. A. MARX, *Documents de Paléographie hébraïque et arabe*, Leyden, 1894, p. 28.

5. T.-S., 16.133, publ. ATS, pp. 140-142.

6. E.g. T.-S., Box K 15, f. 13 III and f. 17. In these cases (four altogether) mention is made expressly of slaves and freedwomen. There are, however, numerous others, in which persons bearing names typical for slaves are in receipt of help from public funds, e.g. J. Theol. Sem., New York, *Adler Coll.* Uncatalogued, n° 89 verso, l. 9 *Rayḥāna*, "Basil Herb."

In conclusion, it might be remarked that the slaves of the rulers, who, as alluded to above, formed the prototype of the slaves employed as business agents by the middle class, also make their appearance in the Geniza papers. A typical representative of this group was Rayḥān, "Basil", who, in 1141, bought silk for the government, an activity about which we hear much in our papers, but at the same time was so influential that he was approached to procure one caliphal rescript for a private person and another for the Christians and Jews of Alexandria in general. The latter was intended to protect the minority population against the encroachments of the poll tax officials in a city which throughout our period (as in classical times) was notorious for its fanaticism and unruliness ¹.

This study has shown that the female slaves formed a vital section of the working population, in so far as they provided domestic help, a type of work shunned by free women ². We, with electricity and gas and countless gadgets at our disposal, can easily forego the services of a maid. However, in the Geniza period, as in the time of our own grandparents, a larger household could hardly do without domestic help. This explains, why female slavery looms so large in the Geniza papers. As to the males, one has, of course, to bear in mind that a slave was obliged to do any service for his master, menial and other. A poet praising his slave for joining him in his literary pursuits and taking care of his library, describes him also as an excellent cook and as a most efficient keeper of his wardrobe ³. Similarly, we have to imagine that slaves accompanying their masters on their extended travels served them not only as business agents, but also in any other capacity, and as we have seen, simple domestics of male sex are not entirely absent from the Geniza records. However, in the society reflected in these records, male slaves were far rarer than females, and were not mainly engaged in manual work, but belonged, more or less, to the world of commerce and finance.

1. Ul Cambridge, 1080 J 258, ll. 6-8 and 19-28. About the buying of silk by the government and its laying hands on all better silk available in Alexandria, the silk bourse of Egypt, cf. *Mediterranean Society*, Ch. VI. About Alexandrian fanaticism, and the irregularities committed by the government officials there cf. same chapter.

2. Cf. *Mediterranean Society*, Ch. II, section 6, note 17.

3. A. MEZ, *Renaissance des Islams*, Ch. XI, p. 160.



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THE EXCHANGE RATE OF GOLD AND SILVER MONEY IN FATIMID AND AYYUBID TIMES

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE RELEVANT GENIZA MATERIAL *

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

The economic, and perhaps even the political history of a country cannot be successfully investigated without a proper knowledge of the means of payment current in the period studied. When gold and silver were used side by side, as in Fatimid and Ayyubid times (969-1250 A.D.), the relationship between the two metals was of vital importance¹). The Muslim historians were fully aware of this fact and have left us considerable information about the subject. This material has been collected in Henri Sauvaire's classic study on Islamic numismatics and metrology and discussed recently in Paul Balog's most meritorious article on the history of the dirham in Egypt, see the List of Abbreviations.

Modern numismatic research provides the foundations for a more exact scrutiny of the subject. It registers the coins preserved, inquires into their places of minting, diffusion and frequency of occurrence, and gathers all the historical information to be derived from their legends. It discusses the size, shape and weight of the coins and tries to assess their fineness. The latter has been done with regard to the period discussed in this paper by Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz in a series of studies using the measurement of the specific gravity of the coins and by Paul

*) List of Abbreviations on p. 46.

1) Following R. Brunschvig, *Hafsidés* II, 74, H. R. Idris, *Zirides*, 641, states: "Les monnaies d'or et d'argent étaient légalement indépendantes l'une de l'autre." This is of course literally true. However, as the material presented in this study will prove, during most of the Fatimid period, the value of silver was indicated by its relation to the standard gold dinar and not vice versa. The situation was different in Ayyubid and Mamluk times, cf. below.

Balog by chemically analyzing the composition of the alloys¹). The present state of the research into Islamic numismatics has been described by George C. Miles in a report to the 1961 International Numismatic Congress in Rome²).

To these two sources, Muslim historical literature and modern numismatic research, a third, auxiliary source is presented here: the documents of the Cairo Geniza, a hoard of manuscripts coming mainly from the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods and preserved originally in a synagogue in Old Cairo. Lately, Mr. Saul Shaked has published *A Tentative Bibliography of Geniza Documents* (see List of Abbreviations) and the reader interested in the state of research in this field is advised to make use of that publication. A general introduction into the subject is to be found in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* under the heading *Geniza*.

The relationship between gold and silver money is illustrated in the Geniza papers in various ways. Often, the official (or rather: market) rate of exchange is explicitly stated, sometimes accompanied by a remark about the high or low value of silver at that time. In other cases we read about actual transactions of exchange made or of rates stipulated in contracts. Occasionally, the market price and the actual rate of exchange obtained are indicated together. In still other cases we are able to calculate the rate from data provided. Finally, remarks in a letter about economic conditions are likely to explain the reason for the high or low rate indicated by it. Thus, all in all, the documentary evidence provided by the Geniza is variegated and of considerable value.

For various reasons, this study must be regarded as preliminary. Naturally, the present writer was able to collect only a part of the data

1) Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, "Studies in the Monetary History of the Near East in the Middle Ages", II, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 6 (1963), 243-277. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 244, Note 1, where further studies by the same author on the subject are indicated. Paul Balog, *History of the Dirhem*, see List of Abbreviations. For a recent discussion of the problem of fineness see Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt and Syria*, The American Numismatic Society, New York 1964, p. 39, Note 1.

2) George C. Miles, "Islamic Numismatics: A Progress Report", *Congresso Internazionale di Numismatica*, Roma 1961, 181-192.

dispersed in about ten thousand complete or fragmentary documents. Moreover, in many legal deeds the dates are lost (torn away or effaced), and in letters it was customary to note the day of the month or the week, but not of the year. Fortunately, the study of the Geniza is now sufficiently progressed to enable us to fix the date of almost every document presented here within a radius of about thirty years. However, it is highly probable that, at a later stage, we shall be able to reduce this to a span of ten years or less. For the letters normally contain details about the travels of persons, movements of ships or the dispatch of consignments, or allude also to military and political events—statements often echoed by similar references in other letters or even in dated legal documents. A full registration of all these data will render the chronology of the Geniza far more tight than it is at present.

The Geniza papers contain also many direct and indirect references to the purchasing power of gold or silver money which might be illustrative of the relative value of the two metals. This material, however, requires special treatment and has been excluded from the present study.

We now present the relevant data in approximate chronological order and, in conclusion, shall try to evaluate briefly their significance. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. George C. Miles, who, by patiently answering my queries throughout the years, gradually introduced me into a field foreign to me. I also would like to thank the librarians and keepers of manuscripts in the libraries, whose manuscripts are used in the subsequent pages. With a few exceptions, for which the reader is referred to Shaked's bibliography, all the manuscripts quoted are still unpublished. However, most of them are now available in typescripts.

1. TS 16.105. Fustat. 26 March 986.

1:30.

A marriage contract, in which the bridegroom gives to his bride, a freedwoman, 12½ silver pieces (זחז, Hebrew), due to her according to Jewish law, adding to them, as was usual, a voluntary bridal gift, consisting of 15 dinars to be paid "later" (the *mu'akhkhar*, to be paid

at the husband's death or at a divorce), and 5 dinars, which were given to her at the time of the contract. She brought in a marriage portion of 45 dinars, a very high sum for a freedwoman (her former master was of a noble and rich family). The marriage portion, just as the *mu'akhhbar*, has to be restituted to the wife after the death of the husband or at the time of a divorce. The total of the bridal gift and the marriage portion is assessed as follows:

60 gold pieces (i.e. 45-marriage portion, plus 15-*mu'akhhbar*)

162½ silver pieces (i.e. 12½ plus 150, representing 5 dinars).

At first sight, such a low value of the silver at such an early period is rather surprising. However, al-Maqdisi, p. 240, reports that some time after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, the value of the dirham was low, see Balog, *History*, p. 115. This might be reflected here. Probably "black" or low-value dirhams are intended, although the document uses the term *kesef* (Hebr.), "silver", without additional definition.

(Probably silver fractional dirhems are intended. Cf. my *Fāṭimid Coins*, nos. 116-124. George C. Miles. — As the fine silver content of the coins of this period was still high (84%), the 1: 30 exchange rate may refer to the ½ dirhem pieces which made the bulk of the circulation. Waraq (black or cut) dirhems were not yet invented. Paul Balog.)¹⁾

2. TS Box 30, f. 284. Fustat. April 1003.

1:37.7.

A day to day account of the income of a textile store for the months Jumādā I and II of the Muslim year 393. After the lapse of two and a half weeks or so, the junior partner or employee changed the silver received into gold and handed it over to the senior partner or employer. 245 dirhams made 6.5 dinars and, two weeks later, 187.5 dirhams - 5 dinars.

According to Maqrīzī's *Treatise on the Famines*, see G. Wiet, JESHO 5 (1962), p. 15 ff., Sauvaire 276, Balog, *History* 115, a serious crisis of

¹⁾ Dr. George C. Miles and Professor Paul Balog most kindly read the manuscript of this article and made the important comments reproduced here. In the following, their names will be given in abbreviated form as M. and B. respectively.

the dirham started in 395 A.H. (began on 8 October 1004), until it reached the bottom of 1:34 in 397 (began on 27 September 1006). Here, we see that this deterioration was even worse already three years earlier. It could not have been caused, as Maqrizī suggests, by the low level of the Nile in 395, since it is evident here already in 393. Our document does not comment on the low rate of the dirham.

(Also possibly fractions. Cf. *Fāṭimid Coins*, nos. 176-191. M.—April 1003-393 AH. The silver content begins to worsen: 68%. I believe here, too, the $\frac{1}{2}$ dirhem pieces were meant. There were no black dirhems yet. B).

3. ULC Or 1080 J 291. Tunisia. 1024 A.D. 1:24.

A huge account, written on vellum, for 23 bales received in Tunisia from Egypt and over eleven hundred pieces of clothing sent to the East. The sums are given in rubā'īs, or quarter dinars, and in dirhams. Their additions prove that one dirham had the value of $\frac{1}{6}$ rubā'ī, which represents an exchange rate of 1:24. E.G.

Column IV	Quarter Dinars	Dirhams	
	74	$\frac{3}{4}$	Quarters (reckoned as $4\frac{1}{2}$ dirhams)
	65	$1\frac{1}{2}$	
	4	4	
Total	143	10	Dirhams
Column V	53	2	Quarter (reckoned as 3 dirhams)
	67	3	
	2	$\frac{1}{2}$	
	122	8	Dirhams

The rate of exchange officially fixed prior to this date was 1:18, cf. Balog, *History*, p. 115. Tunisia, at that time, as its coins prove, belonged monetarily to the Fatimid empire, see, Idris, *Zirides*, 539.

(Fatimid dirhems at this time very uncommon. Cf. *Fāṭimid Coins*, nos. 257-8. M.).

(3a. TS 16.374. Publ., see Shaked, Bibliography, 71. 1022 A.D. 1:24.

A marriage contract from Mastaura, Asia Minor. The money con-

cerned is of course Byzantine. The document is quoted here for the sake of completeness. The bridal gift of 200 ḡūḡ of silver is described as being worth $8\frac{1}{2}$ dinars (the Hebrew *dīnār* is used). 24 Byzantine silver *kerations* correspond indeed to one *chrysun* or gold piece, cf. A. Andreades, *Byzantion* 1 (1924), p. 79. However, T. Reinach, who discusses this detail in *Mélanges Schlumberger*, Paris 1924, 131-2, comes to the conclusion that the definition given refers to the time of the emperor Constantine and not to 1022 A.D. In corroboration of Reinach's thesis it should be noted that in the later part of the contract, the *chrysun* is referred to with the Hebrew word ḡāḥūw , gold piece, and not with *dīnār*. On the other hand, one has always to keep in mind that the medieval scribes regarded inconsistency—or perhaps: variations—in the use of terms as a virtue rather than a vice).

4. TS 13 J 8, f. 2. Summer 1029. Tunisia.

1:12?

A document issued in Tunisia (Qayrawan or Mahdiyya) in Tammuz (began on 15 June 1029) and quoted in a court record of Fustat. "A debt of 280 silverpieces (*kesāfim*, Hebr.), one piece being worth two qīrāts."

In the whole of the Geniza, which is permeated by Tunisian material, I have never come across the term *qīrāt* in the meaning of half a dirham. It would have been also a tautology to say that one dirham equals two half dirhams. However, according to Idris, *Zirides* 641, *qīrāt* was used in this sense in that country. Since several emissions of silver used to be current in Tunisia (see below), the definition "worth two qirats" refers perhaps to the standard half-dirham. Otherwise the reference is to gold qirats and the rate was 1:12, which was quite common for full value silver coins, cf. below no. 24 etc.

5-10. From five letters addressed to Joseph ben 'Awkal or referring to him (no. 9) and an account almost certainly destined for him (no. 10). This great merchant was active in Fustat ca. 1005-1035. Many letters addressed to him are still on vellum and not on paper. In letters datable 1010-1015 he was at the height of his career, see "Three Letters to Joseph Ben 'Awkal From Qayrawan", in *Tarbiḡ* 34 (1964), no. 2, where the chronology of I.A.'s correspondence is discussed.

5. TS 12.282. Vellum. Qayrawan, ca 1005-1035.

1:17 and regarded as low.

The writer of this, only partly preserved letter was one of the Taherti brothers of Qayrawan¹⁾. He reports about a consignment of silver money ('Azīziyya and Mu'izziyya dirhams are mentioned) worth the enormous sum of 1230 dinars. Near the end of the letter he says: "*wa-si'r al-fiḍḍa hābunā yā sayyidī al-manbūt 17 gḥayr dāniq li'ann darāhim al-Andalus kathīra wa-kull al-as'ār taqif 'alayhā.*" "The price of silver here, my lord, namely the coined one, is 17 less one *dāniq*, for the dirhams of Spain are plenty and all the prices are based on them."

For *manbūt* cf. *manbit*, "argente", Dozy, *Supplément* 634a, and *munabbat*, "embossed", Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary* 1320. I take it as coined silver, as against silver vessels, which were traded according to weight and normally obtained a price lower than the equivalent weight of coins. In any case, the context shows that dirhams are intended here.

A *dāniq* is regarded as one sixth of (a dinar or) dirham, cf. Grohman, *Einführung* 145 and Index s.v. Despite its comparatively frequent occurrence in the Geniza papers, I am not yet able to state with certainty which value it had in them. The coin (or money of account) seems not have to be common in Tunisia, cf. Idris, *Zirides*, where it does not appear in the relevant chapters. For 1:17 cf. also below p. 37.

(The 'Azīziyya and Mu'izziyya must be North African Fatimid fractional dirhems. It is interesting that Spanish dirhems circulated in Qayrawān. The output of dirhems by Umayyads of Spain during this period was tremendous. Cf. my *Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain*. The *dāniq* probably was money of account. M.).

6. TS 12.367. Vellum. Tunisia, ca. 1005-1035.

1:27.

In a report about the prices of commodities (presumably in Qayrawan): *wal-fiḍḍa kāsida wal-ṣarf* 27. "Silver sells badly. The rate of exchange is 27." For an exchange rate of 1:25 see p. 45.

1) About this family cf. "La Tunisie du XI^e siècle à la lumière des documents de la Geniza du Caire", *Études . . . Lévi-Provençal*, Paris 1962, 566-8. In the light of subsequent research, some details, especially of the genealogy, need revision.

This does not mean that 1:27 was regarded as either high or low. Commodities are sometimes expressly reported in these letters as selling badly irrespectively of their prices.

7. Mosseri Collection L 52. Alexandria, ca. 1005-1035. 1:33½.

It was winter, many ships were under repair and many travellers got stuck in the city together with five thousand bales of merchandise. The price of new wheat: 9 waybas per dinar, old wheat—11 waybas. *Al-sarf* (the writer, a man from Tripoli, as usual in that place, writes *s* for *š*) 33 *wa-niṣ' bilā* (thus, not: *illā*) *ḥabba*. "The rate of exchange is 33½ approximately." With this statement the letter concludes.

"Without a *ḥabba*" cannot mean: "less one *ḥ*," for this coin throughout the Geniza documents is 1/72 of a dinar, and not a fraction of a dirham. I take *bilā ḥabba* as being the opposite of *ḥabba ḥabba*, "exactly", a very common phrase.

8. TS 12.124. Vellum. Tunisia, ca. 1005-1035. 1:40½.

"The total price (for a consignment sent from Egypt) after the deduction of the discount and government dues was 828 (dirhams) at the rate of exchange of 40½. Actually received (*qubīḍa fīh*) 20 dinars less two qirats and one *ḥabba*."

828:40.5 makes approximately 20.4. For reasons not stated, the actual payment was slightly lower. Such occurrences were frequent.

9. TS 12.566. Fustat, 1020-1030. 1:38-40.

Maghribi dirhams 1:55-65-110.

Mūsā ben Yahyā ben al-Majjānī (i.e. whose grandfather had come from the Tunisian town Majjāna), who for many years had been Ben 'Awkal's chief representative in Qayrawan, writing from Fustat, informs a business friend in Alexandria that he had dissolved his relationship with his former "master" (*mu'allim*). Mūsā, himself a very prominent merchant, died in 1039.

Line 16: *wal-ṣarf 40 bi-dīn' al-qudum, wal-judud 38. wa-ḥāl al-maghribiyya mā yimshī minhā illā mā kān jayyid. wa-si'r al-jiyād minhā tiswā min 55 ilā 65 wal-muqāraba mā lahā si'r illā bi-si'r al-sabb, wa-qad bi't alladhī kān*

‘*indī 110 bi-dīn*’. “The exchange rate is 40 for old and 38 for new dirhams (probably from al-Mahdiyya or al-Manṣūriyya. M.) per dinar. As to the Maghribi dirhams ¹⁾, only the very good ones sell, they are worth 55-65 per dinar. The mediocre ones have no price, except their metal value for founding. I sold what I had for 110 per dinar. Do not buy anything of that stuff.” Later in the letter he remarks that he had sent to the addressee 200 *excellent* Maghribi (dirhams) to cover the expenses for a bale of merchandise forwarded from Alexandria to Mahdiyya. According to the exchange rate for good Maghribi dinars indicated in the letter, this would amount to about 3.3 dinars, a reasonable amount for expenses on an average bale sent from Alexandria to Tunisia.

10. TS Box J 1, f. 54. Vellum. Tunisia, ca. 1005-1035. 1:39.

Four pages from a huge account book, similar to the one dated 1024, cf. above no. 3, containing details about 120 bales of flax costing 1278½ dinars and 32 421 dirhams. In sixteen cases, the silver was changed into gold as follows:

11 bales, rate of exchange	39	dirhams
3 bales, „	39	dirhams less ¼
1 bale, „	39½	
1 bale, „	39	for one dinar less 1 qirat and one <i>ḥabba</i> (1/3 of a qirat).

11-18. Eight dated exchange rates from the middle of the eleventh century.

11. Bodleian ms. Heb. e 98, f. 65 a. Egypt, 1045 A.D. 1:33 1/3.

Most detailed report in the handwriting of Nahray b. Nissim (see below, p. 46), written in Egypt for his senior partner Barhūn b. Isaac Taherti in Qayrawan.

“Account for sales made in 805 (i.e. the Jewish year 4805, corresponding to 1045 A.D.), after the sailing of the ships (from Egypt, i.e. August-September).” The year 806, also referred to, began on

¹⁾ Probably the base Ḥammūdīd dir. of Sabta-Ceuta. Cf. my *Coins of the Spanish Mulūk al-Ṭawāʾif*. M.

14 September 1045. Line 16: "Cashed from . . . $193\frac{1}{2}$, which had to be changed—*wajab lahā šarf*—at the rate of $33\frac{1}{3}$. Received 6 dinars less five qirats ($193.5 : 33.3 = 5.8$).

12. TS Box K 15, f. 53. Buṣīr, Upper Egypt, 1045-6. 1:32 (31.2).

Another two leaves from the same account, referring to business done in Buṣīr, the great center of flax growing, situated at the entrance from the East into the Fayyūm district.

Column I, line 8: "13 dirhams, in gold: a quarter and a sixth (1:31.2)". Crossed out, since the writer summed up the dirhams received and converted them into dinars at the end of the account.

Column IV, line 5: *yajib lahā šarf* 32.

13. TS 20.180 (N 172). Qayrawan, 27 January 1048. 1:33 1/3.

Long letter by the senior partner, Barhūn Taherti, see no. 10. As usual, the letter is dated by day and Jewish month. Moreover, it refers to terrible news brought by the *fuyūj*, the mail couriers¹), expressing at the same time consolation that Abū Naṣr is still alive. The reference is without doubt to the murder of Abū Sa'd, the "vizier" of the Fatimid dowager queen, on Sunday, 25 October 1047, who was survived, albeit only for a comparatively short period, by his brother Abū Naṣr²).

After mentioning a consignment of 30 dinars, the writer continues in lines 19-22: "In a previous letter I had announced that I sent you one thousand dirhams with Abū Bakr al-Rashīdī. Later, however, he refused to carry them and I changed them for you into these 30 dinars." $1000:30 = 33\frac{1}{3}$.

1) Cf. "The Commercial Mail Service in Medieval Islam", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84 (1964) and the article *Fuyūj* in the *Enc. of Islam*.

2) Ibn Muyassar, *Annales d'Égypte*, ed. Henri Massé, Cairo 1919, page 2, line 4, reports that the murder occurred on Sunday, 3 Jumāda I, 439 A.H. According to Wüstenfeld-Mahler, *Vergleichungs-tabellen*, ed. B. Spuler 1961, p. 10, the 3rd was a Monday. This discrepancy, however, should not induce us to doubt the accuracy of Ibn Muyassar's statement. As I had opportunity to observe, such discrepancies are frequent, because the Muslim New Moon was fixed according to actual observation. About Abū Naṣr, Abū Sa'd's brother, cf. W. J. Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Mediaval Islam*, London 1937, p. 87.

14. TS 20.69. Mahdiyya, August 1048.

1:45.

Another, even longer letter by the senior partner Barhūn Taherti, see no. 13, accompanied, on the reverse side, by detailed accounts.

Verso, lines 26-27: *wa-ḥamalt ilayh fi 'l-qāfila . . . raṭl wa-thulth ḥarīr al-thaman* 90 *dirham . . . wa-ḥamalt ilayh ṣuḥbat Abī Zikrī ben Sighmār* 10 *arṭāl wa-wuqīyya ḥarīr al-niṣf li-bn 'ammī, 'alayh fi 'l-niṣf 7 danānīr wa-niṣ'.*

"I sent you in the caravan (i.e. overland) 1½ pounds silk, price 90 dirhams. I sent you also with A.Z. (who travelled by boat) 10 pounds and 1 w. silk, half of which is for my cousin. He has to pay for it 7½ dinars."

Thus, one pound of silk cost 1½ dinars, corresponding to 90:1 1/3 = 67.5 dirhams. This presupposes a rate of exchange of 1:45. Had the quality of the silk in the second case been different from the first, the writer would not have failed to comment upon it.

The letter refers to *hādhibi 'l-sana al-ṣa'ba*, "this hard year".

(The parallel occurrence of different exchange rates in the same year 1048, No. 13 and 14, is to be explained by the serious deterioration of the silver content of the dirhem, which, during the reign of al-Mustanṣir, went down from 47% to 34%. Earlier better coins of the same ruler circulated at the same time as later worse ones. B.)

15. TS 13 J 8, f. 13 (N 170). Qayrawan, 1055/6.

1:50 (60).

Containing also rates of exchange for several local emissions.

An account submitted to the same addressee by the brother of Barhūn Taherti, containing four references to rates of exchange. The account is divided by horizontal lines into six sections (A-F).

A, lines 3-4: 14 2/3 *dīnār yajīb lahā ṣarf waqt anwal bay' al-lāk* 60 *bi-dīnār, yajīb lahā* 880 *dirham*. "14 2/3 dinars make 880 dirhams, the rate of exchange being at the time of the first sale of the lacquer 60."

C, lines 11-12: "Half a bale of cowry shells was sold after the death of our relative for 11 000 dirhams. At that time, the *ṣarf* was 260. But I reckon it at its value today, namely the coinage of 'Azzūn, which has a fineness of one and a quarter (*ḍarb 'Azzūn 'iyār* 1¼), worth 200 per dinar, proceeds 55 dinars." 11 000:200 = 55.

D. "The following is the sum of the dirhams of low value (*al-waraq al-gbayr muthmina*): 14 055. The first to be received was the coinage of Hāshim *lsfl*¹). Before, it were dirhams exposed to the sun, *mushammasa*²). At the arrival of the lacquer, the price of the *mushammasa* had already been fixed, namely at 110 per dinar and the price of Hāshim's coinage — 140. We assume now that the two emissions had been mixed, although each emission should be evaluated according to the actual coins (*wa-kayf an mā yubkam fī kull waqt illā bil-dirham alladhī yuḍrab*)³). However, as a matter of precaution⁴) I regard them as mixed, which would make 125 per one dinar and for these 14 055 dirhams—112 dinars."

The orphans of the relative referred to as having died shortly before are involved here. For both religious and humanitarian reasons one had to be extremely careful not to overreach orphans. Therefore, the writer prefers to give them the benefit of the doubt.

F. "He owes you expenses for the daughter of his sister for the (Jewish) year 815 (5 September 1054 to 24 September 1055, a leap year of 13 months) 630 dirhams of the coinage of Khallūf, having today a rate of exchange of 1:50 and this is at present the currency, *jawāz*, of Qayrawan. However, at the time when the money was spent on her, the rate of exchange was 35 (the reading 5 is not certain). We reckon it at its present value. Thus, there has to be paid for them 12½ dinars. Subsequently, you spent for his niece 1370 dirhams, from various emissions (literally: foundings, *sabk*) which we reckon at a rate of 137, which makes 10 dinars. Total 22½ dinars. In fact, owing to the circum-

1) Thus, and not *ʿl-sfl*. Hardly identical with Hāshim b. Jaʿfar, Idris, *Zirides*, 109-110.

2) This term has not yet been found elsewhere. Its exact meaning remains therefore uncertain.

3) While the general purport of the paragraph is evident, I am not sure about the translation of the words in parenthesis.

4) Precaution: *istighbār*, cf. Dozy, *Supplément* II, 87. It is found in the same sense in a Hebrew letter by Saʿadya Gaon, dated 921/2, published by S. Schechter, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 14 (1901/2), p. 61, where the editor took it however as a place name. Cf. also TS 10 J 9, f. 3, line 7: *tubāʿ ʿala ʿl-ṭalab wa-stighbār*, "it should be sold only when demanded and with precaution."

stances, in addition to the 10-40 more dinars were spent on her." The concluding sentence seems to mean that others had spent for the orphan far more than the addressee.

(One would expect the coinages of 'Azzūn and Khallūf to be Zīrid currencies. But we know of almost no Zīrid dirhems. Cf. Hazard, *Numismatic History of Late Medieval North Africa*, pp. 55, 233. M.).

16. TS Box Misc. 8, f. 65. Egypt, 1056 A.D. 1:40.

A double leaf from a large account for a partner, divided into sections. Section C opens with a reference to consignments sent in the year 49, i.e. the Muslim year 449, which began on 10 March 1057. Thus, the preceding sections A and B, which are the continuation of a lost leaf, present entries with regard to the year 1056.

B, line 4: "He owes to Ben al-Majjānī (the son of the Majjānī mentioned above no. 9, a prominent Qayrawanese merchant like his father) 40 dirhams *waruq*—one dinar."

17. TS Box J 1, f. 1. Egypt, 1059 A.D. ca. 1:40.

A large account in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm, cf. no. 11, in which reference is made to the Muslim years 449 and 450 (1057-8 A.D.). Thus this account is, at the earliest from 1059.

On page III, margin, 14 dirhams are converted into *thulth* (dinar) and $\frac{1}{2}$ qirat ($14 = 8\frac{1}{2}/24$).

18. TS NS J 111. Egypt, 1060 A.D. ca. 1:40.

A much damaged account written in Nahray's hand and, as usual, in Hebrew script. On page IV, upside down, reference in Arabic script to the year (4)51, which began on 10 February 1059. Thus, we are here at the earliest in 1060.

Page III, line 1: 11 dirhams *takūn*, is the equivalent of, one rubā'ī and half a qirat ($11 = 6\frac{1}{2}/24$).

19. TS NS J 28. Egypt, ca. 1060. 1:40.

Report, in the same hand, about sales of textiles. Days and months, but no year indicated. The size and arrangement of the pages, as well

as the names and some other details suggest that this and the following account are of the same period as no. 17.

Verso, col. I, line 12: "For 3138 dirhams, with the deduction of 28 dirhams as a correction (*ba'd 28 drb' min taṣḥīḥ*), at the rate of 40: 78 dinars less one quarter." $3138 - 28 = 3110 : 40 = 77\frac{3}{4}$.

20. TS NS J 127. Egypt, ca. 1060.

1:40.

Maghribi dirhams 1:70.

Page IV, line 14: "For 45 dirhams—one dinar and one eighth" ($45 = 27/24 = 40$). Page I, line 2 from bottom: "He owes me $\frac{1}{2}$ dinar for 35 Maghribi dirhams."

(Ḥammūdid? Cf. Hazard, pp. 233 ff., and Miles, *Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if* M.).

21. TS NS J 198. Egypt, around 1060?

1:40.57.

Detailed banker's account in the same hand, but in different arrangement and reflecting transactions of a type different from that of no. 20. The account is written on the back of a letter addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm.

Page I, line 23: *min Bisr al-ṣayrafī 'an thaman darābim aṣḥā alfayn, si'r dīnārayn wa-suds wa- $\frac{1}{2}$ qīrāt al-100, al-thaman 43 wa- $\frac{1}{2}$ wa-rb'*. "Received from the money changer Bisr for the total of two thousand dirhams at the price of two dinars, one sixth and half a qirat per 100 (dirhams) the total of $43\frac{3}{4}$ (dinars)." $100 \text{ dirhams} = 2.1875 \text{ dinars}$.

22. TS 20.122. Sicily-Qayrawan, 1040-1060.

1:40.

Detailed letter, sent from Palermo to Alexandria by Ḥayyīm b. 'Ammār, representative of the merchants in the Sicilian capital. Dated documents signed by him and identified thus far range from 1052 to 1066. Since the letter contains various references to Maṣḥīḥ, a Jewish chief judge of Sicily who was active in the 1030's and 1040's, it might belong to that period. Hardly later than the 1050's.

Line 20: "I also left with him (a merchant in Mazara, Sicily) Qayrawan dirhams, *qarawīyya*, to the amount of less than a hundred ruba'is, their *ṣarf* being 40 per dinar."

(Zirid? But we have none, cf. no. 15. M.).

23. TS NS J 12 (N 176). Mahdiyya, between 1045 and 1057.

Local emission.

1:200.

(Perhaps Fatimid billon or base silver dirhems. Cf. above no. 15 and *Fātimid Coins*, nos. 386-392, M.).

Letter by Barhūn b. Isaac Taherti, see above no. 11, referring to his travel to Qayrawan. Lines 19 and 22: *wal-ṣarf* 200.

24. TS 16.339 (N 179). Qayrawan, between 1045 and 1057.

Full silver 1:17?

Low value dirhams 1:50.

The brothers Barhūn and Joseph, sons of Mūsā Taherti (cousins of no. 23) write to Nahray.

Line 17: *wal-ṣarf dūn al-50 bi-dīn' wa-ṣa'b an nadfa'hā wa-hī lā tiswā al-thaman*. "The rate of exchange is less than 50 per dinar. It would be hard to pay such a sum, since they (the dirhams, it seems) are not worth that price."

Verso, lines 18-19: *wa-amma as'ār baladna fa-mā lahā qā'ida ḥatta 'l-ṣarf yazīd . . . 17 mathalan wa-yanquṣ mithlbā 'alā qadr al-ṭalab*. (After having reported that the prices of Egyptian flax had risen in "Sicily", i.e. Palermo, the letter continues:) "The prices of our own city follow no principle (i.e. are not steady). Even the rate of exchange one day is over 17 and similarly becomes less than that—all according to demand." In another part of the letter, it was explained that the country was "weak" and therefore even a small change in supply upset the prices.

Unfortunately, the last but one word before the number 17 is effaced. One expects "the rate of exchange rises by etc." In case our reading and interpretation are correct, the apparent contradiction between the two passages would find its explanation in the context. The first statement is preceded by references to purses, *ṣurra*, with thousands of dirhams sent to the addressee, who, of course, was aware of the fact that those were low value dirhams. The second statement, then, would refer to full silver dirhams ($3 \times 17 = 51$). In addition, line 10 contains the following remark: *wa-raja' al-'iyār bi-Sfāqṣ* 3, literally:

"The fineness (of the silver dirham) in Sfax again has become three", i.e. 3 low value dirhams were accepted for one full silver coin, a remark which had its reason in the fact that the relationship of the two types of silver money was by no means steady, see below, p. 39.

25. Ts 16.279 (N 196). Tunisia, ca. 1058-9. Local emission 1:1000.

At the beginning of the letter, the writer refers to the death of the most honored member of the community Barhūn b. Mūsā Taherti (see no. 23), which came shortly after the sack of Qayrawan in 1057 in which the writer was even robbed of his clothing.

Line 15: "I have sent you a bag, *kharīṭa*, with 1424 old dirhams, worth approximately ¹⁾ one and a half dinars. Please find a way, *taḥtāl*, for exchanging them at any rate appearing to you as reasonable and send me a little flax, so that I may make me some clothing, for I have come here (presumably: Mahdiyya) only with a curtain of canvas, *killat kbaysh*, on my head and around my waist, and (send me) a pair of shoes for my feet, wide around the ankles and strong, as well as some *Ṭalḥī* paper ²⁾ so that I may be able to write a letter to Baghdad or to Palestine."

The writer was a scholar who corresponded with the Jewish academies in Baghdad and Jerusalem. His letter is a moving illustration of the disaster wrought on the local population by the invasion of "the *Hijāzis*", as the Hilal and Sulaym are referred to in the Geniza.

In no. 26 we find an even lower rate of exchange for a local emission.

(Perhaps these and the previous "local emissions" are the miserable Fatimid (actually Zīrid) silver coins cited by Hazard, no. 871 = Farruqia de Caudia, "Monnaies Fatimites du Musée du Bardo", Rev. Tunisienne, 1936, no. 172. M.)

26. Bodleian, ms. Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Catalogue 2834, no. 30). Mahdiyya, 1059-1062. Local emission 1:less than 200. 1:1600.

Both the writer and the addressee of this letter occur frequently in

¹⁾ In Arabic: *thamanbā 'alā dīnār wa-nisf*, cf. Dozy, Supplément II, 106 a-b, where the examples quoted are to be translated "approximately", as here.

²⁾ So called after Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, the ruler of Khorasan who died in 828 A.D.,

the Geniza. Its content, compared with that of other letters, fixes its time at the period indicated above.

"I went down to Susa to see the family. The consignment which I had brought was sold (during my absence). The rate of exchange had been less than 200. Then, while my dirhams were there, the rate went down to 1600 per dinar, thus I got for a dinar a qirat."

The last statement, of course, is to be taken with a grain of salt. He received 1/8, not 1/24 of the normal worth of his dirhams. Such a great and sudden devaluation can be explained perhaps by those dirhams being taken out of circulation.

27. TS. 12.794 (N 203). Tunisia, 1060's. European or local emission
1:200 and 1:230.

Regular dirhams 1:50 and less.

Persons and transactions mentioned assign the letter to the 1060's.

Lines 14-23: "The sale (of the pepper) to the Rūm was made in dirhams. I left them with the banker, *ṣayrafī*, to buy with them dinars. The rate of exchange rises every day. He exchanged a part of them into 40 dinars. The rate went down to (literally: attained, *intabā ilā*) 200 and even 230 per dinar. I added for you a certain amount of old dirhams and put everything beneath the earth. At this time, I took them out and had them assayed, *nantaqidba*. Those which are good to be sent to Egypt, I forwarded to you, and those which are not good for that purpose I sold."

Later on, the writer reports that old dirhams were very much in demand in Tunisia.

Verso, line 29: "... (not preserved) ... 2 dinars at a rate of exchange of 50 dirhams, which is much, for today they are worth less."

28. TS 20.127. Mahdiyya, 1064? Full silver coins 1:22.

A long letter of eighty lines by an Andalusian residing in Tunisia, writing to another Andalusian, a relative, sojourning in Egypt. Both

ct. Enc. of Islam under *Kāghad*. This type of paper is frequently referred to in the Geniza documents even during the twelfth century.

are well known from many other letters. Despite this and the many names and other details mentioned in the letter, its exact time has not yet been found out. The following quotation perhaps might be helpful for closer identification:

Lines 65-8: "The city was dead (there was no business) because of our being menaced by the enemy. During the winter we were in great trouble, *qīqa*, until, through God's grace, the enemy was chased away. The city is now, thank God, in good shape: low prices, security and a Sultan who has mercy with the people, may God have mercy with him and keep him for us and for this blessed frontier seaport, *thaghr*."

The reference to the Sultan makes the impression of a new ruler, who could be only Tamīm, who succeeded his father Mu'izz in 1062. In 1063, he was attacked by Ḥammū al-Barghawāṭi of Sfax, who had paid homage to the Ḥammādit al-Nāṣir and came within six or eight miles of Mahdiyya, cf. Idris, *Zirides*, 255-6. Our letter could well allude to this war which fell into the very beginning of Tamīm's rule. No Italian or Norman ships are known to have troubled Mahdiyya in the early years of Tamīm, cf. Idris, *Zirides*, 283 ff., and winter time any how would not have been suitable for an attack by sea.

The following detail also might be indicative of the period. Margin, line 4: "I have changed the Mahdiyya money into Sicilian quarter dinars, for I have no hope that the former is current in Egypt, *takbruj 'indkum*."

Line 68: *wa-si'r al-fiḍḍa el-nuqra 'indna 22 drh' bi-dīn*. "The price of *nuqra* silver is 22 dirhams per dinar."

(For Mahdiyya money cf. the remark to no. 25. M.)

29. Bodleian, ms. Heb. c 28 (Catalogue 2876), f. 52. Alexandria 1060's. 1:25 or 20.

A refugee from Qayrawan reports to his brother in Fustat the death of his son in Alexandria. The young man had written letters to his uncle from Qayrawan at the time of the Hilalian invasion.

Line 11: "The expenses for the burial amounted to fifty dirhams *tiswā 2*, worth two (or two and a half) dinars." The unusual dot above

the line might serve as a symbol for $\frac{1}{2}$. Normally, other signs were used to express that fraction.

30. TS 16.13. Tunisia, ca. 1040-1070. 1:11 $\frac{1}{2}$ less one kharrūba.

A letter from Palermo, Sicily, addressed to Joseph b. Mūsā Taherti in Egypt (cf. no. 24), and reporting about sales made in Tunisia: *wa-kān bi't al-fiḍḍa si'r* 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ *illā kharrū(ba) bi-dīn'*. *ṣaḥḥ waẓnā* 332 *wa-rub* (') *ṣaḥḥ fihā ba'd al-ju'l* 95 *rubā'i*. "I sold the silver at the price of 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ less one kh. per dinar. The weight of the silver was 332 $\frac{1}{4}$. Price obtained after the deduction of the commission 95 quarter dinars."

According to the exchange rate, approximately 29 dinars (332 $\frac{1}{4}$:11 $\frac{1}{2}$) were obtained, which would make around 115 quarters and not 95, as stated here. A commission of 20 out of 115 quarter dinars is out of the question. Thus the ruba'is presumably had a higher value at that time than the dinars, which occasionally occurred. I should like to remark that the letter is written in an exceptionally beautiful and clear hand and there is no doubt whatsoever about the words or the numerals.

31. TS 16.263. Mahdiyya, ca. 1040-1065. 1:36.

Fragment of a large letter by the same Joseph b. Mūsā Taherti, cf. no. 30, addressed, it seems, to Egypt. "We were worried about you because of the enemy"—probably refers to travel by sea from Mahdiyya to Alexandria. The persons and ships referred to occur as between 1045 and 1065 approximately.

"For 5 dinars I paid 181 dirhams."

32. TS 8 J 16, f. 31. Būṣīr, ca. 1040-1065. 1:35.

The same Joseph Taherti, who, as many other Tunisians, used to stay in Būṣīr in order to buy flax and to supervise its combing and packing, cf. no. 12. The letter is addressed to his cousin Barhūn ben Ṣāliḥ, who sojourned in Fustat.

Verso, line 1: "When the price, *si'r*, of dirhams improves, exchange them for me. I have heard that they stand at 35, *annhā kānat* 35; if they have obtained that price, exchange them."

33. TS 13 J 13, f. 11 (N 58), Fustat, ca. 1045-1065. 1:37.

‘Ayyāsh ben Šadaqa, who had copied no. 32 for Joseph Taherti (adding a P.S. in his own name), here writes to Nahray, who then was in Būšir, *from* Fustat.

Verso, line 7: “The exchange rate, *ṣarf*, here is 37 per dinar. Kindly inform me how is the *ṣarf* at your place.” The writer’s assumption that the provincial town has an exchange rate by itself, is noteworthy.

34. TS Box 28, f. 246 (N 169), Alexandria, ca. 1050-1065 1:36

This is a letter by Barhūn ben Šālīḥ Taherti, cf. no. 32, to Nahray sent from Barqa, Cyrenaica, but complaining about a bad customer in Alexandria. “He paid me 200 dirhams, reckoning them as about six dinars (i.e. 1:33), while the exchange rate was 36.”

35. Gottheil-Worrell, Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection, New York 1927, 120-123. Jerusalem, ca. 1050-1070. 1:36½.

Lines 31-36. The editors took *rubā‘iyya* as meaning “city square”, which caused much confusion among scholars engaged in the study of the historical topography of Jerusalem. In fact, it means simply “quarter dinars” and the purport of the text is as follows: Although the exchange rate of the dinar was 36½, the writer received for the ruba‘is of his business friend only 20 dirhams per dinar, because they had lost their normal appearance; *wa-qad laḥiqhā khaḍra min al-taḥmīr allatī* (!) *ḥummirat fī miṣr wa-waḡant ‘alā hādhibi ‘l-baḡiyya allatī tabaqqat dirham wa-niṣf li-man ‘āwadhā bil-taḥmīr*. “They were affected by verdigris through the “reddening” made in Egypt. I paid one and a half dirhams to have the remaining ruba‘is re-reddened.” The Geniza contains indeed a detailed description of the ‘reddening’ of coins, but, it seems, of giving silver coins the appearance of pure gold.

(These might be fractional base gold (yellowish) dinars of the Ḥammūdids, ‘Amirids of Spain etc., cf. Miles, *Mulūk al-Ṭ*. “Reddened” to make them look like the high-grade Sicilian ruba‘is. M.)

36. TS 13 J 16, f. 12, top (N 83). Alexandria, ca. 1060-1080. 1:44.

"There are only a few dirhams to be had in Alexandria. They are worth 44. I am upset. May God turn everything to the good."

37. TS 10 J 32, f. 10 (N 78). Alexandria, same time. 1:42-3.

Line 8: "The price of the dinars is 43-42" (it was customary to mention the higher sum first—unlike our own usage).

As is proved by a reference to a deal in dates, both this and the previous letter were written at one and the same time. One writer got excited about the rate of exchange, the other did not.

38. TS 8 J 27, f. 5 (N 39). Alexandria, ca. 1060-1080. 1:49.

Line 18: *wal-nās hōn taht 'aks min ṭama' al-ṣarf wa-hū al-yawm* 49, *wal-balad mutahayyir wa(l) -si'r al-qamḥ naqaṣ*. "People here are miserable because of the rapacious exchange rate. It is 49 today. The city is in turmoil and the price of the wheat has gone down."

Otherwise, the rather detailed letter does not betray any anxiety about abnormal times.

39. TS 8 J 18, f. 27 (N 119). Alexandria, ca. 1060-1080. 1:50.

"Please write me how the dirhams are in Fustat. The rate of exchange here is fifty per one dinar." This detail is reported among many other items and without any additional comment.

40. TS 8 J 19, f. 24 (N 151). Egypt-Tunisia, ca. 1060-1080.

1:less than 50.

This is a letter from Tunisia, sent to Nahray when he was at the height of his career. Among many other consignments, 20 dinars are sent as a payment for 1000 dirhams, which Nahray had dispatched to Tunisia, because they obtained there a higher price than in Egypt. This means, that in Egypt he had to pay considerably more than 50 dirhams for one dinar. Line 12 ff.

Normally, silver money was sent from Tunisia to Egypt, not the other way.

(Right, because the numismatic evidence shows almost no dirhams in Egypt. Very little silver output in Egypt even in Abbasid times and none in Umayyad. M.)

41. David Kaufmann Collection, Budapest, Geniza 3. Fustat, ca. 1080. 1:50.

The names of both the writer and the addressee of the letter occur in a document dated 1079.

Section B: "Business here is slow and practically at a standstill. For there is much confusion because of the rate of exchange, which is at present 50 dirhams per one dinar more or less. An epidemic is raging in the environs of the city and, because of this, the flow of good dirhams has been cut off, so that every one has difficulties with his business" *ḥall bi'a 'alā jibātha wa-nqaṭa' al-dirham al-ṭayyib min al-nās wa-ṭḥayyarū* (spelled: *w'ṭhyrw*) *'l-nās fī ma'ā'shbiḥ li-sabab dhālik*.

Clearly, this slump of the dirham in Fustat was due, according to this writer, who had just arrived from Alexandria, to a specific local situation. It is interesting to note that the report seems to assume that the city had to rely for its steady supply of good silver money on the country and the province.

This letter will appear in a full translation in the volume *Readings in Mediterranean Social History*, prepared by the present writer.

42. Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris, ms. VII E 193 (N 125). Alexandria, ca. 1050-1090. 1:60 and 1:62½.

A letter with a P.S. by Mūsā ben Abi 'l-Ḥayy, who appears in countless Geniza papers (one dated 1068. E.g. no. 29 is addressed to him). Here, he sends to Nahray in Fustat 2000 dirhams and asks him to sell them at the rate of 60 dirhams per dinar, and another 2000 worth 16 dirhams per 1000 dirhams, i.e. 1:62.5. The letter contains many other details about transactions in coins (all gold), but no remark about exceptional times.

43. TS 13 J 15, f. 19 (N 108). Alexandria, ca. 1070. 1:46.2

A letter dealing largely with the manufacture of clothing. Discussed

in detail in the present writer's forthcoming book *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. I, ch. II, section 2 and Note 38.

44. Westminster College, Cambridge, Fragm. Cairensia Misc. 51.
Maḥalla in Lower Egypt, around 1095. 1:50.

The head of the Jewish local community congratulates the Ra'is al-Yahūd on his return to power (in 1094) and notes that the new taxfarmer (a Jew!) of a government building, rented to the community to be used as a synagogue, had raised the rent by two dinars. He adds: "The poor have more need for these 100 dirhams than the government". (Verso, lines 6-8).

45. TS Box K 15, f. 97. Fustat, ca. 1100. 1:38.5.

In a list of receivers of alms 580 dirhams are converted into 15 dinars and $1\frac{1}{2}$ qirats. The time of the documents is ascertained through the signatures of three judges whose time is known from many other, dated, documents, cf. S. D. Goitein, "The Social Services of the Jewish Community, as reflected in the Cairo Geniza documents", *Jewish Social Studies* 26 (1964), p. 83.

46. Bodleian ms. Heb. c 28 (Catalogue 2876), f. 57. Fustat, ca. 1100. 1:43.

A collection made for an orphan girl and her mother. 322 dirhams are converted into $7\frac{1}{2}$ dinars. A number of contributors appears in contemporary documents.

47. Bodleian ms. Heb. a 3 (2873), f. 29. Around 1100. 1:40.

Letter to a well-to-do physician who was with the army and, like other physicians dealt also in books. Line 8: 1144 $\frac{1}{2}$ dirhams are worth, *qīmathā*, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ dinars. The names of several well known persons are referred to.

48. TS 8 J 4, f. 18c. Alexandria, September/October 1102. 1:106.6
(local emission?)

A beautifully written court record in which a settlement is made for a wife during the absence of her husband. Unfortunately, the left edge of the page is cut away. The missing words are complemented here in brackets.

Line 4: "She will receive every month three way(bas¹) of grain, as well as) the cost of its grinding, one raṭl of Syro-Palestinian olive oil²), also every month, together with the wood (needed as fuel and) twenty dirhams the worth of which is a sixth of a dinar and half a qirat, *'isbrīn dirham alladhī qīmathā suds dīnar wa-niṣf qirāt*.

$$x = \frac{20 \times 48}{9} = 106.6. \text{ Such a rate of exchange is unknown for}$$

Egypt from other Geniza documents. Most likely, the reference is to a local emission of low value used for small expenses. Alexandria was flooded with and much influenced by Maghribis, who, as we have seen (cf. nos. 23, 25 and 26) were accustomed to such local money.

49. ULC Or 1080 J 91 (India book 21). Alexandria, ca. 1125-1145.

I:12.5.

A letter to Abū Zikrī Kohen Sijilmāsi, representative of merchants in Fustat. The time of both the addressee and the writer, as well as of persons mentioned in the letter is known from dated documents.

Line 8: "*Nuqra* silver coins are rare in Alexandria and their price, *si'r*, has risen. 100 are worth 8 to 8 less one eighth³). I worked hard and searched for you all the hidden places, until I brought together for you and for Ibn Lebdi (silver coins) for about one hundred and forty dinars."

This statement presupposes that of dirhams which were not *nuqra*, i.e. full silver, at least forty had to be given for one dinar.

(By this time, it seems to me, the dirhem in question must be Murābiṭ. Cf. Hazard. In the 12th c., at least until toward the end, there is evidently no silver East of the Maghrib,—not even in Seljūq etc. lands. M.)

1) According to W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte*, Leiden 1955, p. 52, the equivalent of 12.168 kg. (wheat). There seems to be a misprint in the quotation from Muqaddasi. For "10 mann" read: 15, cf. *ibid.*, p. 39, where the number is correctly given.

2) Since *shāmī* oil is involved, perhaps the Palestinian raṭl is meant, which was about six times as heavy as the Egyptian. A quantity of about 2.5 kg. of oil would correspond better to about 36.5 kg. of wheat than a mere 437.5 gram. For the various values of raṭl cf. W. Hinz, *ibid.*, p. 29.

3) For the custom to mention the higher number first cf. above, no. 37.

50. TS 13 J 20, f. 23 (India book 230). Egyptian Rif. 1127-39. 1:37.

A letter to the same with greetings to the Gaon, or head of the Jewish academy, Maṣliāḥ, who was in office from 1127 through 1139.

Line 6: "I sent you with Faraḥ thirty dinars (and x) dirhams at the exchange rate of thirty seven for one dinar. By our religion, a fire which is not going out is burning in my heart because of them, *fī qalbī min ḥālhim nār lā taṭfā*."

I take this as meaning that the writer had to buy the dirhams at a high price and that the normal rate at that time was around 40 per dinar.

51. TS 20.80 (India book 273). Qalyūb-Fustat, ca. 1140. 1:35.

An extended fragment (about 1300 words) of a letter to Ḥalfōn ben Nathanel, a great India merchant, from his brother Ezekiel. The paragraph concerned is a complicated report about the sale of a great quantity of Sicilian cheese, effected in a *dār wakāla*, ware house and bourse. The price was to be paid after four months. The buyer took a loan of fifty dinars from a banker "at the rate of exchange of 1:35".

Does this mean that, in those days, silver, and not gold, was the standard? Or, did the banker, while granting the loan, reckon the dinar as being worth only 35 dirhams, when, in reality, it was worth 40 dirhams or more? See, however, the following items.

52. TS 13 J 3, f. 4. Alexandria, January 1143. 1:35.7.

The *ṣāḥib al-mawārith*, the Muslim judge in charge of estates, delivers to the Jewish authorities the goods of a foreign Jewish merchant who was drowned near Alexandria. Many items. In one case, 236 dirhams are converted into 6 dinars and 15 qirats. Fully translated in *Readings in Mediterranean Social History*, cf. no. 41.

53. TS 16.122. Ascalon, Palestine, 1142-3. 1:34.

On verso, payments of rent by a tenant to the Jewish community of Ascalon for the year indicated. In one case, $\frac{1}{4}$ dinar is reckoned as being worth $8\frac{1}{2}$ dirhams.

54. TS 8 J 9, f. 19. Egypt, middle of the twelfth century. 1:34.3.

Large fragment of a letter with accounts, especially of goods brought from Syria. "You have received from Muhammad al-Shāmī one and a sixth dinars for the price, '*an qīmat*, of the 40 dirhams which he borrowed from me."

55. TS Misc. Box 8, f. 66. Sunbāt in Lower Egypt, July 1150. 1:42.

A huge account of a store in a provincial town about sales of cheese, wax, wine (and silk—the latter being a kind of investment and security rather than an object of regular trade). Among some smaller items: "Awāḍ received one gold dinar at the rate of 42 silver pieces *dīnār 'ayn ṣarfuh* 42 *waraq* on account of the donkey." Column II, line 8-9.

Here again we see the dinar defined by an amount of low value silver pieces, cf. above no. 51.

The future student of this document should pay attention to the fact that *dirham* is used in it in two different meanings, as a coin and as a weight.

The account contains another statement which might indicate a quite different rate of exchange. It deals with the sale of ten pounds of silk costing ten dinars (half of the standard price) and of which 4 dinars had been paid. For the exchange of these 4 dinars (which the writer obviously had paid in silver), an agio of 6 dirhams *waraq* had to be added. After noting this, the account continues: "He (the seller of the silk) had received two ḥabbas more than 4 dinars, which makes $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". The latter amount can be only in silver dirhams. A ḥabba is one third of a qirat and $1/72$ of a dinar. $2/72$ dinar = $3/2$ dirhams would represent an exchange of 1:54 approximately.

56. TS 8 J 17, f. 18. Published, see S. Shaked, Bibliography, p. 86. Egyptian Rif and Fustat, 1142-1159. 1:40.

A collection, made at the instruction of a Ra'īs al-Yahūd who was in office 1142-1159, on behalf of foreign Jews who had been captured by pirates. Twice, I, verso, lines 10-11, and II, verso, line 13, the *ṣarf*

is expressly given as being 40. The sums were collected in nine provincial towns.

57. TS Box K 6, f. 149. Fustat. Same date as no. 56. 1:39½-40.

List of contributors to a collection, written in the unmistakable hand of the judge Samuel b. Sa'adya. Dated documents signed by him and identified thus far range from 1165 to 1203. Still it seems to the present writer that this list is contemporary with no. 56 and represents the collection made in the capital, complementing the one made in the province. For it differs from all the many others found in the Geniza with regard to Fustat by the high sums recorded and by the fact that the collection was made during fourteen days at least, details concerning the first, second, thirteenth and fourteenth day having been preserved. As far as extant, the list enumerates fifty contributions made in dinars, twelve in *waraq* and two in *dirham*. It seems, however, that there was no difference between these two terms for silver money.

The rate of exchange obviously was 39½-40 per dinar, for the *waraq* contributions of individuals amounted to 10, 19½, 19¾, 20 (four cases), 30 and 39 dirhams, clearly equivalents for ¼, ½, ¾ and one dinar respectively.

58. TS 16.39. Fustat, in or around 1179 or 1183. 1:37½.

Detailed account of a religious slaughterer, specifying the various community officials and other persons to whom he had made payments of seven dirhams week after week during a full year. Ritual slaughtering, like any other public source of revenue was farmed out. The payments were made not to a communal treasury, which did not exist, but to officials and other persons earmarked by the *parnas*, or social service officer in charge.

The long document is almost complete, but the date is torn away. It can be restituted approximately by a combination of the names mentioned and the correspondence of the days of the weeks and the months.

The community paid the poll tax for the ritual slaughterer as for

other communal officials. As his occupation brought an income, he had to return to the community what it had outlaid for him. In the case concerned—65 dirhams for $1\frac{3}{4}$ dinars, which is most clumsily specified as follows:

For 1 dinar	$37\frac{1}{4}$	dirhams
For $\frac{1}{2}$ dinar	$18\frac{1}{2}$	and $1/8$ dirhams
For $\frac{1}{4}$ dinar	$9\frac{1}{4}$	and 1 kharrūba
Total	65	dirhams

Kharrūba denotes here $1/16$ of a dirham, cf. also Sauvaire, quoted by Grohmann, *Einführung* 143.

59. TS 10 J 28, f. 13. Fustat, October 1194-July 1199. 1:40.

A *qā'a*, or groundfloor, in a house "belonging to the Poor", was rented as from October 1194 for the duration of two years at a total rent of 160 dirhams, which makes 80 dirhams a year. As the entries on the reverse side show, the rent was continued until Shawwāl (5)95 A.H., July 1199, and each year two dinars were paid by the tenant. The money was used for repairs made in other buildings belonging to pious foundations. This presupposes an exchange rate of 1:40.

60. TS 20.44. Published, see S. Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 73¹⁾.
February-March 1223. 1:40.

Auction of books of a physician and scholar after his death. Prices are given in dinars or their fractions, *ʿayn*, or in dirhams, called indiscriminately *waraq*, *dirham waraq*, or simply *dirham*. In two cases, column II, lines 24-6, the sums of $4\frac{3}{4}$ and 3 dinars respectively are qualified by the remark: *ṣarf* 40.

One is tempted to surmise that the actual rate of exchange was lower, say: 1:36, and that a higher one was stipulated in these two cases, because a longer delay of payment was granted to those two buyers than was usual. However, no remark to this effect is made and one has to bear in mind that the scribes of the Geniza documents usually were

1) Add: D. H. Baneth, *Tarbiḥ* 30 (1961), 171/2.

not very methodical. It may well be that while dotting down the two items concerned someone remarked that it was necessary to define the value of the dinar. The copyist noted the rate of exchange twice and then stopped doing so.

61. TS NS J 30. Minyat Ziftā Jawād in Lower Egypt, March 1232. 1:40.

A claim is brought before the rabbinical court (headed by one Gamliel, cf. Acts of the Apostles 5:34 and 22:3) "to hand over immediately 35 dinars, the amount of which in low silver coins is 1 400 dirhams", *bi-taslīm 35 dīnār mablaghbā waraq alf wa-arba' mi'a dirham*. Before, the claimant had agreed to monthly installments of 1½ dinars.

The following four examples do not allow definite conclusions as to the relationship of the gold and silver values mentioned in them. The passages are quoted here because they presuppose a generally accepted rate of exchange at the time of their writing.

62. Bodleian ms. Heb. d 61 (Catalogue 2859), f. 9a. Fustat, 27 March 1100.

Joseph, the son of Joseph, the milkman, *labbān*, receives from the "money of the Poor" one dinar as loan, to be paid back in weekly installments of two dirhams. A term is set for the beginning of the repayment, but not for its end.

The document is written and signed ¹⁾ by Isaac b. Samuel, the Sefaradi (the Andalusian), an outstanding judge and scholar, and two other competent persons, and utmost care was taken with money destined for the poor. Therefore, the absence of a term for the end of the payments is an indication of the existence of a fixed relationship between gold and silver around 1100.

63. TS 13 J 3, f. 23. Bilbays in Lower Egypt, September 1215.

A Maghribi living in this provincial town claims from his fiancée after the dissolution of the engagement a sum of over 4 dinars which

1) For the uninitiated it should be remarked that the Andalusian signed in monumental script, although he wrote the document in his cursive hand, which is, however, identifiable through other manuscripts, where he uses it also for his signature.

he allegedly had spent on her in cash and food. She is prepared to swear that she had received not more than 48 dirhams. After the intervention of "righteous elders" a settlement is reached in which she agrees to acknowledge a debt of 58 dirhams.

It would be erroneous to conclude that 58 dirhams corresponded to anything near the original claim of over 4 dinars. The parties in a lawsuit occasionally made ridiculously exaggerated claims and were not ashamed to settle finally with a small fraction of the sum they demanded first.

64. TS NS J 412. Fustat, 18 August 1217.

1:40?

A divorcée renounces 5 out of 15 dinars which her former husband owed her on the basis of their marriage contract. She receives from him one dinar in cash, while the remaining nine were to be paid in weekly installments of three dirhams as from 30 December 1217. No date is set for the termination of these payments.

In addition, she receives "for his children" $5\frac{1}{4}$ dirhams per week for the duration of one year, as from the Jewish New Year, which began on 4 September 1217, about two weeks after that settlement.

Clearly, the one dinar received had to cover the divorcée's maintenance between the date of the settlement and the day when the weekly installments were to begin, a period of 19 weeks and one or two days. The amount of $5\frac{1}{4}$ for the children (in the plural, and not in the dual, as would have been said in case two children were involved) must mean that there were three children and that $1\frac{3}{4}$ dirhams were earmarked for each per week. The supposition was that two dirhams per week were the absolute minimum, the lowest alimony known otherwise from this period being half a dirham per day, but that in view of three children living together a "reduction" was granted to the father. Similar cases are known from this period. It appears that the mother, in acknowledgment of the advance payment of one dinar for a period of about twenty weeks, also contented herself for this period with the weekly minimum of two dirhams. This would again reflect a rate of exchange of 1:40.

If this assumption is correct, the payment of nine dinars in installments of three dirhams per week would require about two years. For people who live on $1\frac{3}{4}$ - 3 dirhams a week, even a slight fluctuation in the value of the money during such a long period would have been of considerable impact. Under such circumstances, the absence of the stipulation how many installments were to be paid is rather remarkable. Normally, in contracts allowing for installments, either the number of installments or their termination or both are indicated. The settlement was not made in a court, but by a notary. However, his handwriting is orderly, the legal terms are used properly, he states that all the formalities required by the law had been attended to and even notes the name of the witness who testified together with him the agreement, a matter of precaution omitted by many notaries in the entries in their books.

65. British Museum, ms. Or 10 126. Bilbays, September 1239.

A merchant had contracted a commenda, *qirād*, with a Maghribi (not identical with the one referred to in no. 63) before both a Muslim and a Jewish court. This had been converted into a loan for which a fixed interest of 20 dirhams per month was stipulated. Both the Arabic term *ribā'* and the Hebrew *ribbīth* are used, as well as *fā'ida muta'ayyin(a)*, "fixed profit". When the debtor finally proved to be unable to pay, he was forced to sell his house to the creditor for 36 dinars, but was granted the right to buy it back in the course of twelve years. The court session of September 1239 dealt with a side issue: the statement that there remained no claim against the Maghribi except for some of the interest which he had not yet paid¹).

The 36 dinars must have represented the whole debt and perhaps even part of the interest due, for otherwise there would have been no need for the settlement of September 1239. Assuming that the debt was 36 dinars and the exchange rate again 1:40, the yearly interest

¹) This account slightly differs from the one given in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 51 (1960), 38-39. At the time of the writing of that article I had at my disposal only my notes, not a transcript of the original.

stipulated would have been 6 dinars per year or $16 \frac{2}{3} \%$. Since among the thousands of Geniza documents not a single other one has been found in which a fixed interest is stipulated to a Jew, the feasibility of this assumption cannot be checked by comparison with other Geniza material.

For the first half of the thirteenth century, dated documents have been preserved in the Geniza practically for every year and for most years several documents. However, only in exceptional cases, reference is made to the rate of exchange between gold and silver coins, cf. nos. 60 and 61. Most of the transactions of smaller or middle size were made in dirhams. The sums are normally indicated with the phrase: *min al-waraq al-jayyid al-miṣrī al-muta'āmal bih waraq jayyidan* (thus in no. 66) or *al-darāhim al-muta'āmal bihā bil-diyār al-miṣriyya allatī hī naqd miṣr*, "the dirhams which are in use in the land of Egypt, which is the Egyptian currency", or similar phrases. These expressions are old, but appear regularly and extensively only in this period and one wonders whether they do not emphasize that the official character of the means of payment, but not its content of silver guarantees its value. We note at random five cases, indicating the sums involved and the topic of the document referred to.

(Presumably Ayyubid dirhems, for the most part struck in Syria. M.)

66. TS 13 J 3, f. 19. Fustat, 1 January 1207.

A partnership, or rather a commenda, for the duration of six and a half months for the conduct of a druggist's business between Cairo and Fustat. One partner pays in a thousand dirhams and the other one ("the agent") one hundred.

67. TS 13 J 3, f. 21. Fustat, 1210.

Acknowledgment of a debt of 552 dirhams by a silk weaver, to be paid back in three monthly installments of 10 dirhams and the rest in installments of 20 dirhams.

68. TS 13 J 4, f. 1. Minyat Ghamr in Lower Egypt, spring 1226.

Loan of 50 dirhams to be paid back in four half-monthly installments.

69. TS 13 J 4, f. 4, verso. Fustat, spring 1229.

Rent of one half of a house with a garden for 600 dirhams in two years. By the end of each month 25 dirhams are due, of which the tenant retains 5 dirhams each month for expenses on watering the garden.

70. TS 8 J 6, f. 9, verso. Fustat, July 1231.

A loan of 215 dirhams, to be paid back in one lump after the lapse of twelve months. (The document says: twelve months, and not: one year, because that particular year was a Jewish leap year, which has thirteen months).

It is even more noteworthy that the so-called "cut-up" dirhams, fractions of dirhams cut up in irregular shapes are invariably mentioned in contracts without their equivalent in gold. They are always introduced with the formula *al-darāhim al-mutaqaṭṭi'a al-muta'āmal bihā bil-diyār al-miṣriyya*, "the cut up dirhams which are legal tender in Egypt." This fact confirms the correctness of Paul Balog's assumption that these dirhams *découpés* were official emissions. Cf. Paul Balog, "Études numismatiques de l'Égypte musulmane", *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 33 (1952), especially p. 28 and 33.

In another study, "Notes on some Fatimid Round-flan Dirhems", *Numismatic Chronicle*, XVIIth Series, I, 1961, p. 176, Balog has shown that the "cut up" dirhams represented the normal silver currency in Egypt already in late Fatimid times—a fact not reflected in Geniza documents.

The examples noted thus far are all from the time of Sultan al-Kāmil (ascended the throne in 1218) and prior to his reform of the coinage in November 1225.

71. TS 18 J 1, f. 29. Fustat, spring 1220¹).

Acknowledgment of a debt of 815 cut up dirhams, 660 of which had

1) Because of the omission of the tens, the court record is erroneously dated 1501 (of the Era of the Documents, which would correspond to 1190 A.D.). However, it is made out "under the authority of Abraham Nagid" (the son of Moses Maimonides), who assumed that title in 1213 and bore it until his death in 1237.

been already acknowledged in a document made by a Muslim notary. To be paid at any time demanded since it was *dayn ḥāll*, a debt already due.

The series TS 18 J will be published by Dr. N. Golb of Chicago University.

72. ULC Or 1080 J 239. Fustat, spring 1220.

A loan of 480 cut up dirhams, augmented subsequently to 500. The debtor gives as security his share in two shops with an upper storey which he owned in partnership with a Christian (he possessed two thirds of that property and the Christian one third). The date of the original document is torn away. However, since the additional 20 dirhams were granted on 4 May 1220, while the whole sum was due already on 3 June 1220, it stands to reason that the whole loan was granted only for a very short period.

73. TS 10 J 26, f. 5. Bilbays - Ashmūm-Ṭanāḥ, Lower Egypt, spring 1224.

Sale in Bilbays of one half of a site, *sāḥa*, with walls, *jidrān*, in the village Ashmūm-Ṭanāḥ for 40 cut up dirhams.

74. TS. 16.200. Fustat and Cairo, 1225.

A physician grants a loan of 400 cut up dirhams to a *simsār*, or broker, active in Fustat and Cairo, to be paid back on 3 October 1225. The sum was the price for a quantity of *qand wa-qatṭāra*, types of sugar and honey mixed with sugar. Just as in the eleventh and twelfth centuries everyone invested in silk, thus in the thirteenth century sugar factories became a most favorite form of investment, repeatedly mentioned as owned by physicians.

After our doctor received his cut up dirhams back in October 1225, he must have been disappointed to see them taken out of circulation the following month in the wake of al-Kāmil's reform.

Thus, our document must have been written either in 1220 or in 1230. Since the *mutaqatṭi'a* were taken out of circulation in 1225, and the other documents quoted here also precede al-Kāmil's reform, the date of 1220 is more likely or perhaps the only possible.

About Kāmili money the following details have been found thus far in the Geniza.

75. TS NS Box 321, f. 79. Shortly after 1225.

A loan granted to a community official for public expenses such as dues on the import of myrtles into Fustat (used at the Feast of Tabernacles). Unfortunately, only a fragment has been preserved, the top, bottom and right side of the document having been torn away. With regard to the money, the following details can still be read:

Line 5: . . .) *min al-fulūs al-jiyād al-kāmiliyya al-muta'āmal bihim* (!) *al'ān*
 6 . . .) *dirhaman wa-dhālika 'an tis'a darāhim nāṣiriyya wa-ma'ahā*
 7 . . . *mā*) *waṣanbu maks li-marāsin miṣr*
 8 . . . *i)thnayn wa-sittīn dirhaman*

“Excellent Kāmiliyya coins which are now legal tender . . . (a sum of more than ten) dirhams, being the equivalent of nine Nāṣiriyya dirhams. In addition to this, (the sum) he paid for the custom dues for the myrtles for Fustat—62 dirhams.”

(*Fulūs* means here “money”, not copper coins. B., M.—Al-Kāmil did not issue copper in Egypt (neither did the other Ayyubids), only in Syria. But his new, reformed dirhems of globular or lenticular shape were just as low grade silver, as were the *waraq* dirhems he pulled out of circulation. Therefore I think the exchange rate corresponds with this. On the other hand, all the Ayyubids, including al-Kāmil, issued excellent grade, full weight dirhems in Syria. B.)

It is a wellknown fact that the Kāmili dirhams continued to circulate in Mamluk times, cf. Balog, *History of the Dirhem* 133-4. This is confirmed by some Geniza documents.

76. TS 16.355. Fustat, spring 1261.

A woman sells one quarter of a house for 300 Kāmili dirhams, *min al-darāhim al-nuqra al-kāmiliyya*. Another fragment, put under the same glass, as being a part of the same document, and which speaks also about a sale of a quarter of a house, but for dinars, not for dirhams,

has nothing to do with our document. As a scrutiny of the second fragment proves, it was united with the one discussed here erroneously.

77. Mosseri Collection A 18. January 1268.

A divorcée agrees to accept 30 instead of 70 Kāmili dirhams due to her, whereas her former husband forgoes claims which he had against her.

It seems practicable to add here a few other dated documents from Mamluk times concerning the exchange rate of gold and silver. For after 1265 the Geniza material becomes comparatively sparse and for the fourteenth century a special study based on it is hardly possible.

78. TS 6 J 1, f. 23. Fustat, 27 June 1280. 1:13 1/3.

Sale of an Abyssinian slave girl with a white spot on her left eye for 266½ *nuqra* (dirhams).

The strange price finds its explanation in the usage of the Geniza courts attested between 1280 and 1379 A. D. (see the following numbers) to evaluate one dinar as 13⅓ dirhams. $266\frac{1}{2} : 13\frac{1}{3} = 20$ dinars, the usual price for a slavegirl, cf. *Arabica* 9 (1962), p. 10.

79. TS NS J 297. Fustat, 14 November 1289. 1:20.

The second installment due to a wife according to her marriage contract was fixed at 20 dinars being 400 dirham *nuqra*.

This is in accordance with the data in literary sources for this period, see Balog, *History of the Dirhem* 133 ff.

On the other hand, the very fact that it was necessary to fix the rate of exchange of the dinar seems to indicate that fluctuations were common in those days, see Balog, loc. cit.

79a. Bodleian ms. Heb. a 3 (Catalogue 2873), f. 46. 1:13 1/3.

This is a marriage contract, dated 11 September 1296. The dinar is described as worth 13 ⅓ "white silver pieces", as below in No. 82. The value of the items of the trousseau is indicated in dinars. The bridal gift: 40 dinars.

80. Mosseri Collection V 8. Published, see S. Shaked, Bibliography, p. 246. Fustat, September 1301. 1:13 1/3.

A marriage contract. Concerning the estimate of the value of the dowry it is said expressly that each dinar was worth $13\frac{1}{3}$ ṣḥṣ (silver coin, Heb.)

81. TS 12.39. Minyat Ghamr in Lower Egypt, 1315/6. 1:13 1/3.

Fragment of a marriage contract. Lines 15-16: "Each dinar is worth $13\frac{1}{3}$ *dirham nuqra*."

82. TS 16.206. Fustat, around 1337. 1:13 1/3.

Fragment of another marriage contract, written in the same hand as TS 13 J 2, f. 18, which is dated November 1337. Line 12: "Each dinar is worth $13\frac{1}{3}$ *kesāfīm levānīm*" (Hebr., "white silver pieces"—as opposed to *dirham aswad*, cf. also p. 38).

83. TS 24.8 Fustat, same period. 1:13 1/3.

Huge, and almost complete marriage contract, but the date is not preserved. One of the signatories of no. 82 signs here too. In line 23, in addition to the definition of the dinar as in no. 82, the following remark is added: *mim-maṭbe'a ṣemān ṣe*, "of the currency of this time."

84. TS 13 J 4, f. 15. Fustat, 3 November 1379. 1:13 1/3.

Engagement contract: *ṣarf* $13\frac{1}{3}$ *bi-dīnār*.

Before trying to draw conclusions from the sources presented above, a word must be said about the terms current in them. The most important fact emanating from an undoubtable mass of evidence is the use of the word *dirham* in the general sense of a *low value* silver coin. Full silver coins are called either (*dirham*) *nuqra*, cf. nos. 28 and 49 (cf. also nos. 76, 78, 79 and 81), or *fiḍḍa*, "silver", cf. nos. 5 and 30 (and also no. 6) or *fiḍḍa nuqra*, see below. In a published letter by Nahray ben Nissim¹) the word has the same meaning: 17 *fiḍḍa* are worth one dinar, cf. the almost identical rate in no. 5.

¹) Hebrew University Library, Jerusalem, Geniza ms. 2 (N 19), publ. E. Strauss-Ashtor, *Zion* 7 (1942), 153-154, verso line 5.

A court record from Fustat from pre-Fatimid times, dated 967, speaks of 600

The following passage from the letter TS 12.288, which was written around 1070, is a telling example of the use of the term *darāhim* in the specific sense of low value silver coins. Line 11: *wajadnā fīhā mi'atayn wa-sittīn dirham fiḍḍa nuqra wa-khamsa wa-arba'in dirham wa-niṣf darāhim*. "We found in it (in the *ṣurra*, purse) 260 dirham of *nuqra* silver and 45½ *darāhim* dirhams."

The term *waraq* for low value silver coins, so frequent in the Ayyubid period, cf. above pp. 32 ff., rarely appears in Fatimid documents, cf. e.g. no. 16 B or the following passage from a letter written about 1100: "I had sent you one dinar and 50 *dirham waraq*. I am sending you now four new dinars and 20 *dirham waraq*"¹). Likewise, the term "black dirham" is repeatedly found only in Ayyubid times, e.g. in a court record of 1214, in which a debt of 76 1/4 dirhams *min al-waraq al-muta-āmal bih fi'l-diyār al-miṣriyya darāhim sawād* is acknowledged, to be paid back in weekly installments of 10 dirhams²), or when a schoolmaster grants in 1224 a loan of 200 *kesāfīm sheḥōrīm* ("black silver pieces", Hebrew), to be returned in five monthly installments of 40 dirhams³). From Fatimid times, thus far only one example has been noted, approximately from the year 1060, when a scribe from Old Cairo informed his colleague and partner that he had received as a fee "two black dirhams, *dirhamayn sūd*, which I sold for one dirham"⁴). Most likely, "black dirhams" designate here a coin, about a hundred pieces of which were worth one dinar, while the regular low value dirham had a rate of exchange of about fifty, cf. above nos. 9 and 48 with nos. 38-44.

The reason for the rarity of the terms *waraq* and *dirham aswad* in documents from the Fatimid period is to be sought in the use of dirham

pieces of silver called *niqār*, of pearl-like appearance. With the exception of the term *niqār* the text is in Hebrew. TS 12.515, published, cf. Shaked, Bibliography 59. (The word *bedōlah* was translated at that time with Arabic *lu'lu'*, cf. *Jāmi' al-alfāz*, ed. Solomon L. Skoss, New Haven 1936, I, 196, which reflects the Hebrew usage of the tenth century.)

1) Dropsie College, Philadelphia, Geniza ms. no. 395, lines 9-10.

2) TS 10 J 5, f. 1.

3) TS 12.62.

4) TS 13 J 20, f. 7.

in the general sense of a low value silver coin. As such it designated both the regular dirhams whose fineness was about one third of the *nugra* and local emissions which must have consisted almost exclusively of copper or other base metals. It is strange, at first sight, that in one and the same letter the term was used indiscriminately for both types, cf. nos. 15 and 27, as well as no. 26, where no definition of the dirham concerned is provided. The reason for this lack of precision obviously was the fact that the difference in the value of these two types of coins was so evident that there could be no doubt as to which of them was intended. In no. 15 D, local emissions are called *waraq ghayr muthmina*, cheap silver money.

The relationship between the full and low value silver coins was by no means stable. No. 24 contains a remark to the effect that around the middle of the eleventh century, the *'iyār* in the Tunisian town of Sfax "again was 3", i.e. that again 3 low value dirhams were accepted for one full silver coin. We hear about a similar fluctuation in Egypt approximately at the same time: "They gave me seven dinars in silver at a rate of 3½, while the rate was 4" ¹⁾. The reference is of course to the rate of exchange not of silver and gold, but of low and full value silver.

Silver ingot is called *ḥajar fiḍḍa*, "silver stone", or *ḥajar nugra*, the latter occurring in a court record written in Fustat around 1100, when 13 *ḥajar nugra* weighing 2900 dirhams were sent in four packages, *ḍabābīr*, from that city to the West ²⁾. The former is frequently to be found in Nahray's correspondence. Silver ingot was traded together with silver ornaments ³⁾.

The following table summarizes the rates of exchange discussed above. In the cases where the rate is given explicitly—they form by

1) University Library Cambridge Or 1080 J 130 (N 226), line 5. The place of writing is not preserved. Since the writer mentions, however, his coming through al-Fuwwa, a place where the Nile branches off into a canal leading to Alexandria, the writer must have been at that time in Egypt.

2) TS 20.121, line 36. The word *ḍub(b)āra*, package, is normally used for a bunch of letters sent with a courier in a caravan or with a friend by boat.

3) Papyri Collection of the Heidelberg University 915.

far the majority—the numbers of the passages concerned are printed in regular type. Where the rate has been found by calculation, the relevant numbers are italicized. An asterisc accompanying a number indicates that the document concerned contains an opinion about the rate of exchange mentioned. Where there were doubts concerning the interpretation of a document, a question mark was added.

THE RATES OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN GOLD AND SILVER MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

Maghribi and other local emissions excluded

Number of dirhams contained in one dinar	Serial number of the passage	Number of dirhams contained in one dinar	Serial number of the passage
11 7/16	30	37½	58*
12	4?	37 2/3	2
12½	49*	38	9*
13 1/3	78. 79a. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84.	38½	45
16 5/6-17	5*. 24? See p. 38	38 3/4-39¼	10
20	29?. 79	40	9*. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 22. 47. 56. 57. 59. 60. 61. 64?
22	28*		8
24	3	40½	21
25	29? See p. 46	40. 57	55
27	6*	42	37
30	1	42-3	46
32	12	43	36
33	55, end?	44	14
33 1/3	11. 13	45	43
33½	7*	46. 2	38*
34	53	49	39. 41*. 44
34 1/3	54*	50	42
35	32. 51*	60-62½	
35 2/3	52		
36	31. 34*		
36½	35*		
37	33*. 50*		

For Maghribi and other local emissions cf. nos. 9, 15, 20, 23-27 and 48.

Conclusions

(a) If we exclude the rates of $13 \frac{1}{3}$ and 20 silver pieces per dinar, which, in our documents, are confined to the Mamluk period and will be discussed later, there are only two cases of around 12, three of 17, three of 20-22, and three of around 25. In the vast majority of instances, 30 or more silver coins had to be paid for one dinar, in other words, the dirham in common use was not the *nugra*, but the low value coin. The full silver coins appear as means of payment for merchants engaged in the oversea trade, cf. in particular no. 49, where *nugra* to the respectable amount of 140 gold dinars were bought in Alexandria for two India merchants at a time of extreme scarcity of silver. It must be emphasized, however, that even in accounts of great merchants, amounting to tens of thousands of dirhams and over a thousand dinars, the dirham referred to is the low value coin, not the *nugra*, cf. no. 10.

(b) The rate of exchange of 1:35, attested in literature for 441 A.H. (1049), cf. Balog, *History of the Dirhem*, 122, is reflected also in the Geniza documents at certain periods of both the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. The table printed above contains fourteen instances of a rate between 32 and $37\frac{1}{2}$ dirhams per dinar.

(c) It seems, however, that the merchants and the judges, the two arbiters on market values, were inclined to fix 1:40 as the normal rate of exchange. While the rates between $33 \frac{1}{3}$ and $37\frac{1}{2}$ are represented as official only by one or two examples each, 40 appears in nine instances as *ṣarf*, to which four others between $40\frac{1}{2}$ and 44 are to be added. This official *ṣarf* is attested by dated documents as from 1056 through 1232.

The rate of exchange 1:40 is based on the assumptions that one gold dinar is worth $13 \frac{1}{3}$ pieces of full silver, cf. here nos. 78 and 79a-85, and that one full silver piece has the value of three dirhams with low silver content, cf. above p. 39. These rates are attested in a treatise on "The Secrets of the Egyptian Mint" by Maṣṣūr b. Ba'ra, who wrote during the reign of al-Kāmil (1218-1238), cf. A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Standard of Fineness of Gold circulating in Egypt at the time of the Crusades", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74 (1954), p. 163 and

Note 10. The Geniza material presented here shows that these standards were applied in practice, albeit intermittently, for over two hundred years.¹⁾

(d) A specific problem is presented by the Maghribi dirhams, those struck under the Zirids in the eleventh century. Often they had in Egypt a lower value than the Egyptian coins and sometimes they were not accepted there as currency at all. In addition, local emissions having a rate of exchange of about 1:200 were common and exposed to serious fluctuations. In one case, we read about a devaluation from 200 to 1600 dirhams per dinar. Such a crash seems to be feasible only in case of a coin which had next to no metallic worth and, under unspecified circumstances, was suddenly taken out of circulation. It is, however, remarkable, that in one case even the trade with Europeans was made in this currency, cf. no. 27.

(e) Another special case and actually lying outside the scope of this article is the coinage of the Mamluk Sultans. The Geniza documents from the late Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods well illustrate two basic statements made by Paul Balog in his new book about the subject: "The earlier gold-silver bi-metallic system yielded its place to a newer system in which silver became the standard coin"²⁾. And, specifically under the Mamluks: "The dirhem now became money of account

¹⁾ Note de Claude Cahen: Plusieurs références dans la littérature rendent incontestable pour les derniers Fatimides et les Ayyubides le rapport 1/40. Mais, ainsi que je l'ai indiqué au colloque des *Settimane* du Centro Italiano di studi dell'alto Medio Evo de Spolète, 1964, p. 10 n. 27, on n'a peut-être pas assez souligné que ce taux correspond, à travers les changements des rapports entre les dirhams et les dinars effectifs, à une stabilité du rapport de l'or et de l'argent. Nous savons en effet que l'alliage légal des dirhams de valeur 1/40e de dinar était à 3/10es d'argent, le reste en cuivre. La valeur de ce dernier métal est inconnue, mais comme elle est de toute façon faible, on peut admettre que le dirham de même poids, s'il avait été d'argent pur, aurait valu approximativement 3/40es = 1/14e/ valeur du dirham légal classique. Il n'est donc pas question que le changement de valeur du dirham effectif soit dû à un changement de valeur de l'argent. Il reste à savoir pourquoi les Fatimides ont préféré frapper un gros dirham impur plutôt qu'un petit dirham pur ou un gros de valeur plus forte: sans doute le premier aurait-il été trop exigü, et le second moins adapté aux besoins du commerce courant.

²⁾ Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt and Syria*, New York 1964, p. 41.

only”¹⁾. When, throughout a full century the Jewish courts used to fix the value of the dinar at 13 1/3 *nugra*, cf. nos. 78 and 79a-84, we are aware of the fact that they had in mind not a coin, but the metallic value of the silver. The Muslim Courts did the same, see p. 46.

(f) To return to Fatimid times: The frequent inquiries and statements about the market rate of the dirham, as well as the actual reports about their “sales” prove that the value of silver constantly was exposed to fluctuations. On the other hand, as between 986 and 1232 A.D. an average ratio of 1:40 is to be observed in our documents (22 cases of 30-39 and 26 cases of 40 and above).

(g) A study of the alimonies granted by the courts to orphans and divorcées in different times, as well as that of the emoluments of lower public servants seems to result in the assumption of a more or less steady value of the silver. Two cases quoted above, nos. 62 and 64, dated 1110 and 1217 respectively, indicate that the authorities concerned must have assumed the existence of a generally accepted rate of exchange between dinars and dirhams in those periods.

(h) In view of this long range relative steadiness of the silver dirham one wonders whether the lower strata of the society—as opposed to the merchants class—were much affected by the fluctuations of its market price. Remarks to the opposite effect, as in nos. 36, 38 and 41 were either confined to times when the dirham was particularly unstable, or concerned merchants rather than people of the lower classes.

We might imagine that large sections of the population had dealings only in regular silver dirhams and had not much need for, or occasion of changing them into gold. This is indeed a point made with great vigor by Carlo M. Cipolla with regard to medieval Italy²⁾, and the present writer was inclined to believe that this was the case also in the countries of the Fatimid empire. The picture of a society in which one class is more or less confined to the use of low value silver money,

1) Ibid., p. 45.

2) Carlo M. Cipolla, *Money, Prices and Civilization in the Mediterranean World*, Princeton 1956, p. 34-35.

while another is privileged to handle gold is indeed very impressive. It seems, however, that this assumption is not borne out by the evidence of the Geniza documents, at least for the eleventh and the first half of the twelfth centuries. The marriage contracts even of the poorest people are in dinars, wretched, low-priced houses are sold in dinars and even small loans are granted in gold pieces. In some cases, as in our no. 2 above, we might assume that the dinar served only as a money of account and that payment actually was made in silver. In most cases, however, it is expressly stated that the bridal gift, albeit small, was handed over in "complete and full weight gold pieces"¹⁾; even of ten dinars, paid for one eighth of a small house in (New) Cairo it would be said that they were *dananīr dbababan 'aynan mathāqīla*²⁾, and a loan of only five dinars, defined as "pure, fullweight, excellent and true Egyptian gold"³⁾ would be taken out at a time when others received loans in low value silver. Thus it seems that gold fulfilled an important role in the daily life of the population at large, and consequently the fluctuations of the value of the dirham must have concerned the lower middle class as much as the more affluent. In this connection, attention should be drawn to TS 16.356, a contract of lease of half a house from April 1120, where a rent of seven gold qirats is stipulated per month "irrespective of the *ṣarf*, or rate of exchange."

In conclusion and referring to what has been said at the beginning of this paragraph we would assume that sudden and severe changes in the rate of exchange would be felt as a calamity, while local and seasonal fluctuations would be observed with composure, just as in our time people would watch the stock market during an uneventful period.

There is no need to emphasize that the present writer does not claim any competence in the fields of economic history or Islamic metrology. He felt, however, compelled to publish the facts presented above and

1) E.g. TS 16.71 (Fustat 1084). The poverty of the couple is exemplified both in the small bridal gift and in the poor marriage portion brought in by the bride.

2) A ms. in the E. N. Adler collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary New York, file 2558, not bearing yet an individual number. Dated 1141.

3) TS 12.583 (1090 A.D.).

to explain how he understands them, because their interpretation affects many aspects of Geniza research. It is to be hoped that subsequent discussion will correct any mistakes which might have occurred and clear up obscurities which have still remained.

The Geniza material referring to money circulating in the countries of the Indian ocean has been excluded from this study ¹⁾.

ADDITIONS

6a. TS Arabic 54, f. 93, margin. Fustat, ca. 1034. 1: 25.

A letter, sent from Fustat to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt to the merchant Elazar b. Samuel, known from a document signed by him in 1034 (TS 13 J 1, f. 8). Abū Naṣr al-Tustari (cf. No. 13) is also referred to.

Margin, lines 2-3: "*wal-fiḍḍa al-nuqra taswā 25 dirham bi-dīnār wal-maksūr 'alā qadr mā fih min al-nuqra*". "The nuqra silver is worth 25 dirhams for one dinar and the broken ones are valued in proportion to the nuqra (i.e. pure silver) which they contain."

85. P. Fakhri no. 1, publ. by A. Grohmann, "Einige arabische Ostraka und ein Ehevertrag aus der Oase Bahriya", *Studi in onore di A. Calderini e. R. Paribeni*, Milano-Varese 1957, 500-503. June 1348.

1: 13½.

1) Copper money seems to be referred to in the following quotation from a document from Alexandria dated 1196. The left upper corner of the document, a court record, is torn away. But it seems hardly possible to complement the missing words in a way much different from that suggested below. A man receives from an old woman a house with an upper storey (or the upper storey of a house), *al-dār al-'alw*, as a gift, against which he undertakes to provide her with food all her life and to pay her fifteen dirhams every month which would cover her expenses for clothing. The dirhams are defined as follows: *khamṣa 'aṣhar dirhaman min al-darāhim al-(-muta'āmal bihā darāhim) al-nuḥās wa-bādhbihi 'l-khamṣa 'aṣhar dirhaman takūn bi-rasm kiswathā*, "15 dirhams which (are legal tender, namely dirhams of) copper". In the lacuna indicated here by brackets there is room for about 16-18 letters. Bodleian, ms. Heb. d 65 (Catalogue 2877), f. 13.

Fifteen copper coins a month seem to be a poor provision for clothing. But in those days, old people normally had enough clothing for their regular use and often left a large stock of wardrobe as part of their estate. In similar contracts with old people no mention is made of clothing at all.

For *darāhim* in the meaning of copper money cf. P. Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans*, 45.

A Muslim marriage contract. The bridal gift is $1300\frac{1}{3}$ dirham *nuqra*, of which $666\frac{2}{3}$ are due immediately. $666\frac{2}{3}$ is exactly one half of $1333\frac{1}{3}$, which is $100 \times 13\frac{1}{3}$. No doubt, this sum was intended. There is either a scribal error, i.e. 33 were omitted, or the parties agreed finally on a more "round" sum. There are other cases where the immediate payment was one half of the total, see A. Grohmann, *APEL* I. p. 71. G. Levi della Vida, *Eretz-Israel* VII, *L. A. Mayer Memorial Volume*, p. 66*, and, in particular, the contract from the year 1290 A.D., publ. by Su'ad Mahir, '*Uqūd al-ṣawāj 'ala 'l-mansūjāt al-athariyya*, Cairo, no date, p. 11.

This contract shows that the practice of the Jewish courts which regarded one dinar as being worth $13\frac{1}{3}$ *nuqra* silver was in conformity with that of the Muslim courts.

ABBREVIATIONS

Balog, *History of the Dirhem* — Paul Balog, "History of the Dirhem in Egypt from the Fātimid Conquest until the Collapse of the Mamlūk empire," *Revue Numismatique*, 6^e serie, III, 1961, 109-146.

Dozy, *Supplément* — R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, Leide 1927.

Grohmann, *Einführung* — Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde, I, Praha 1954.

Idris, *Zirides* — H. R. Idris, *La Berberie Orientale sous les Zirides*, Paris 1962.

India book — A collection of 328 Geniza papers referring to the India trade, prepared for publication by the present writer.

N — A collection of 260 Geniza papers emanating from, or addressed to, or connected with the Qayrawanese merchant Nahray ben Nissīm, who was active in Egypt between 1045-1095. The nucleus of the collection was brought together by the present writer and then turned over to Mr. M. Michael for a Ph.D. thesis. Writings of Nahray quoted here without the sign N were identified after Mr. Michael had completed his thesis.

Sauvaire — M. H. Sauvaire, *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de la numismatique et de la métrologie musulmanes*. Extrait du *Journal Asiatique*, Paris 1882.

Shaked, *Bibliography* — S. Shaked, *A Tentative Bibliography of Geniza Documents*, Mouton and Co., The Hague 1964.

TS — The Taylor-Schechter Collection of Geniza manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Cambridge.

ULC — The Geniza manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge, not included in TS.



BRILL

Appendix: The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times (JESHO VIII, pp. 1-46): Additions

Author(s): S. D. Goitein

Source: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Nov., 1966, Vol. 9, No. 1/2 (Nov., 1966), pp. 67-68

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APPENDIX

THE EXCHANGE RATE OF GOLD AND SILVER MONEY IN FATIMID AND AYYUBID TIMES (JESHO VIII, pp. 1-46)

Additions

BY

S. D. GOITEIN

The following items should be added in the article mentioned above.
Page 47.

34a. TS Arabic Box 54, f. 15, Fustat, ca. 1060 1 : 36

Bank account by Nahray b. Nissim, cf. above p. 41, column II,
line 10: for 5 *warag* dirhams $\frac{1}{8}$ dinar and 1 ḥabba, i.e. $\frac{10}{72}$ dinars.
 $7.2 \times 5 = 36$.

34b. TS Arabic 30, f. 32, Fustat, ca. 1060 1 : $31\frac{1}{4}$ - $31\frac{1}{2}$

Account of a fledgling banker, cf. above, no. 3, p. 37, column Ic,
l. 2: Exchange rate $31\frac{1}{4}$. This was on Wednesday. On the following
Sunday, in a part of the manuscript not published above, the rate
was $31\frac{1}{2}$.

34c. TS 13 J 19, f. 9, Alexandria 1050-1051 or 1083-1084 1 : 30

The letter is dated both according to the Muslim and the Jewish
months (*mustabill Rajab* and *li-yawmayn khalawna min Kislev*)¹). The two
months coincided in 1050-1051 and 1083-1084. In view of many details
mentioned in the letter I prefer the latter date. But, thus far, I am
unable to provide a definite proof for my preference.

Farah b. Isma'il b. Farah, Alexandria, asks his father in Fustat to
send him for 20 dinars dirhams and for 30 dinars Syrian (*shām*) or
Damascus dinars. He adds: "The exchange rate here is 30."

¹) In most cases where Geniza documents contain both Muslim and Jewish
dates there is a discrepancy of one day. Here, *mustabill* might perhaps be translated
as "beginning of" (and not: the first).

34d. TS Arabic 30, f. 215, Fustat, ca. 1053. Nuqra silver 1 : 17-17½

Accounts by Nahray about two and a half years after his marriage, cf. above p. 58, no. 1. In column I, line 15, the rate is given as 17, in col. II, l. 7, as 17½. The actual sales in col. I, lines 3 and 5 were slightly below 17. The writer uses indiscriminately the terms *fiḍḍat dhahab*, col. I, l. 3, and *nuqra*, col. II, l. 6, cf. above page 58. note 2.

48a. TS 13 J 27, f. 4, Alexandria, ca. 1120

Nuqra 1 : 12

Letter by Isaac Nīsābūrī, much of whose correspondence has survived. Line 29: *wal-fiḍḍa* 8½ *almī'a*, "hundred pieces of silver cost 8½ dinars".

Professor Philip Grierson kindly contributed the following suggestions:

JESHO VIII, page 6, no. 4. The silver pieces here are Byzantine miliaresia. These were regularly worth 2 carats, 12 of them going to the Byzantine nomisma. They are regularly described as worth 2 carats in the Book of the Prefect and similar documents. The merchants are simply dealing in foreign coin.

Page 19, no. 30. The same here. Your difficulty about 115 and 95 is due to a confusion between Byzantine and Arab carats and coins. 95 Byzantine solidi would weigh almost exactly 115 Arab ones, at least if the latter ones were a bit light. Though I agree that the quarter-dinars should be the normal Sicilian ones. But I am sure that the coins involved are miliaresia.



BRILL

Erratum to JESHO VIII 1965 p. 35: The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times: A Preliminary Study of the Relevant Geniza Material

Author(s): S. D. Goitein

Source: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Jan., 1969, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), p. 112

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ERRATUM to JESHO VIII 1965 p. 35

(The exchange rate of gold and silver money in Fatimid and Ayyubid times)

In *JESHO* 8 (1965), 35, and subsequently in my book *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. I, pp. 385-386, a passage from a fragmentary Geniza record was rendered faultily, which might lead readers to erroneous conclusions. Meanwhile I have found another, also fragmentary, second version of the contract in question, contained in MS TS Box 25, f. 2. Here the date is partly preserved, which shows that the contract was made between 1229 and 1237. Thus, the approximate date assumed by me was correct. From the new fragment it appears also that the 62 *Kāmili fulūs* were dirhems and not copper coins and were regarded as an equivalent of 9 *Nāṣirī dirhems* plus customs dues paid to the *makkāsīn Miṣr*, the customs officials of Fustāt. (I had read instead of *mksyn* — *mrsyn*, and translated consequently “myrtles”!). Thus, 62 *Kāmili fulūs* do not correspond exactly to 9 *Nāṣirī dirhems*, but to a somewhat higher amount.

The customs dues were paid for *jarrab(t) anbāq ḥashīsha*. Should we assume that in those days not only the leaves and stalks of the hemp, but also its berries were used as drugs?

The second version does not contain the details about the origin of the debt. There were two schools of legal thought, some preferring to specify the origin of a debt, others regarding it as safer to omit it.

S. D. GOITEIN



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Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza

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PORTRAIT OF A MEDIEVAL INDIA TRADER: THREE LETTERS FROM THE CAIRO GENIZA¹

By S. D. GOITEIN

(PLATES I–IV)

The first comprehensive survey of Geniza documents about the trade on the route to India was published by me in *Speculum, A Journal of the American Medieval Academy*, 29, 181–97, in April 1954.² At that time I was able to give a report about 130 Geniza papers related in one way or another to the India trade. Soon after the article was published, a distinguished institution offered me the opportunity to publish the material in full. I accepted with enthusiasm and set feverishly to work. But slowly it dawned upon me that one should not try to solve problems by sagacity at a time when new sources that could provide factual answers to those problems might lurk around the corner.

My doubts were justified. When a revised version of the *Speculum* article was included in my *Studies in Islamic history and institutions* (Leiden, 1966),³ 200 new items had been identified, and I had the feeling that we were standing on firm ground. I even uttered the surmise: ‘No substantial increase is expected.’⁴ This too became true. When, a few years ago I rearranged the entire corpus of material for a final edition, only about 50 new entries had to be added. However, among these there were some the absence of which would have been much regretted. Letter II, the pivotal piece of this article, is of this precious type.

Another introductory remark is necessary. The Jews of the Mediterranean area—unlike their brethren in Iraq—were latecomers to the India trade. Why should they have taken upon themselves the physical dangers and material risks of those far-flung travels, when the blessed shores of the Mediterranean offered enough opportunities for gaining a livelihood? Only at the very end of the eleventh century, when the overwhelming power of the Christian Mediterranean states reduced Muslim and Jewish seafaring, did other outlets for enterprising men have to be found. During the last two decades of the century we are able to observe how the Mediterranean Jews slowly felt their way along ‘the route to Yemen’ and soon also to various parts of India. As represented to

¹ Professor Goitein died on 6 February 1985 in Princeton at the age of 84. We had been acquainted for some thirty years, through regular correspondence and his visits to the Genizah collection at Cambridge. In 1983 it was my great pleasure to see him elected an Honorary Fellow of the School, the highest honour that we can confer. The following contribution to Genizah research was introduced in a letter to me from Goitein dated 3 January 1985, just after he had submitted the typescript of the fifth and final volume of his magisterial *A Mediterranean society*, whose parts I have regularly reviewed in *BSOAS*. My last letter from him was dated 5 February 1985, the eve of his death and hence unsigned, but forwarded to me by his secretary. I am more than merely pleased to welcome this final contribution into the pages of the *Bulletin*, and am grateful to Professors Mark Cohen and Paula Sanders, respectively of Princeton and Harvard, for having seen its definitive version through the press, with the aid of Amy Singer, Professor Goitein’s research assistant at the time of his death. (John Wansbrough)

² In the same year I published some examples of Geniza texts connected with the India trade, ‘Two eyewitness reports on an expedition of the King of Kish (Qais) against Aden’, *BSOAS*, xvi, 2, 1954, 247–57.

³ Quoted here as Goitein, *Studies*, see *ibid.*, 330–1. The book is now available in an Arabic translation: *Dirāsāt fī ‘l-tarīkh al-Islāmī wal-nuẓum al-Islāmiyya*, ed. and tr. ‘Aṭīyya al-Qawnī (Kuwait, 1980).

⁴ Originally an edition had been planned based on a collection of 197 items plus eight supplements added in the course of the years. This was the version available to Shaul Shaked while compiling *A tentative bibliography of Geniza documents*, (Paris–The Hague, 1964), and is referred to here as ‘India Book, Old’. The new arrangement, in seven chapters according to subject matter, is quoted here as ‘India Book, Final’.

us in the Geniza, the India trade was part and parcel of the Mediterranean economy with windows wide open to a foreign, but by no means frightening world.

Simultaneously with my work on the 'India Book' I collected material for a comprehensive survey of the documentary Geniza at large. The more I progressed with the survey, the more I gained new insights for the understanding of the India papers. In 1958 I decided to do the survey first. It took 27 years and five volumes of *A Mediterranean society* (four on the market and one in the press) as well as a number of other publications to carry out the 'survey'. But any student of the India papers from the Geniza now has the tools for working on this fascinating subject within the framework of the wider world to which it belonged.⁵

One of the early pioneers on 'the route to Yemen' was 'Arūs b. Joseph al-Arjawānī al-Mahdawī,⁶ the maker and seller of purple cloth, a native of al-Mahdiyya (then the main port and capital of the country now known as Tunisia). 'Arūs emigrated early in his life to Egypt, where he formed a seemingly life-long partnership with Sibā', a Syro-Palestinian (as his name indicates), not the only case where westerners and easterners co-operated in Egypt, while not neglecting connexions with local people.

'Arūs lived up to his auspicious names. He was an acknowledged expert in the difficult art of purple dyeing, sending the products of his industry to North Africa and Spain. He expanded his business to include fine clothing in general and developed it into an exchange of the products of the Mediterranean area and the Indian subcontinent. Unlike other merchants of his time and status he travelled repeatedly to Upper Egypt and also to the southern section of the west coast of the Red Sea. Letters addressed to him after his return from a successful business venture seem to assume that he would soon set out for another trip to the South.⁷ We possess two almost complete copies of a contract in which a noble lady entrusted him with 300 dinars (then a very substantial sum) to do business for her 'on the way to Yemen'.⁸ 'Arūs was a highly regarded member of the community, renowned for his generosity and helpfulness.

In one respect 'Arūs was not successful. Despite many good wishes to the contrary he had no male offspring. Here the hero of our story enters the scene.

⁵ *A Mediterranean society: The Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza*, I, *Economic foundations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967); II, *The community* (1971); III, *The family* (1978); IV, *Daily life* (1983); V, *The individual* (manuscript delivered to the publisher in December 1984). The series is quoted here as *Mediterranean society*. The details of the decision of 1958 are given in the Preface to I, pp. vii–viii. In my *Letters of medieval Jewish traders, translated from the Arabic* (Princeton, 1973; referred to here as Goitein, *Letters*), 62–71, 175–229, 299–304, 335–9, letters of, or concerning, India traders are translated; for instance, a letter to Moses Maimonides from his younger brother David, before the latter embarked on the voyage on which he perished.

I apologize for the biographical details. I felt I owed an explanation to readers who might have read some of my previous publications on the India trade.

⁶ Abū 'l-Afrāh 'Arūs means 'a joyful bridegroom', a beautiful name given by a happy mother to her newborn. It is not found by me elsewhere in the Geniza, nor among the approximately 35,000 Arab names listed by Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 819) in his *Gamhara* or *Genealogical dictionary* (ed. W. Caskel, Leiden, 1966). ('Arūsa, 'bride', as a personal name, was met by me only once in the Geniza documents, also in North Africa). Arjawān, purple, cf. Hebrew *argaman*, was also pronounced *arjuwān* and, especially today, *urjuwān*. But the latter pronunciation is not attested in the Geniza.

⁷ How distant at that time (the 1080s) even 'Aydhāb, the main port on the western coast of the Red Sea, from which one sailed to Yemen, India, and China, appeared to the people of Cairo, may be concluded from his question addressed to 'Arūs after his return from one of his trips south: 'Let me know whether anyone (meaning: of their acquaintances) has got as far as 'Aydhāb.' TS (= Taylor-Schechter Collection in the Cambridge University Library) 16.308, l. 31, 'India Book, Final', ch. 6, no. 7.

⁸ TS 16.23 and TS 10 J 5, f. 2, 'India Book, Final', ch. 6, no. 5. See also *Mediterranean society*, III, 252 with nn. 15–17, and 253 with nn. 22–4.

‘Allān b. Ḥassūn (both names were common in Tunisia), a son of a sister of ‘Arūs, was taken by him into his business and married to one of his daughters. The young man, as we shall see, did not disappoint his uncle. Knowing well what ‘Arūs missed, he always addresses him as his father and describes himself as his progeny. In letters and legal documents ‘Allān is called ‘ ‘Arūs’s sister’s son’.⁹ Joseph, a son of a brother of ‘Arūs, preceded ‘Allān as a member of his uncle’s firm, but apart from what is told about him in our Letter I, he seems not to have left any other trace in the Geniza, unless the passage translated in n. 15 about ‘ the son of a *brother* of ‘Arūs ’ refers to him, which is highly probable.

We get a first intimation about ‘Allān’s career from a letter to him when he was on a business trip ‘ to the West ’. The letter was dictated by his wife to her son, still a schoolboy, at the time when she had just weaned another boy. She complains that ‘ the old man ’ (her father) was also away on a voyage ‘ so that we are like orphans, a house without a man! ’ Thus we see that ‘Arūs had ‘Allān apprenticed in the Mediterranean trade (with which he had certainly been familiar from his hometown of al-Mahdiyya), while he himself was again on one of his voyages, probably to the South.¹⁰

Letter I, translated below, shows us ‘Allān as a novice in the India trade, but as a man in full command of the situation. The letter also gives us an inkling of the hesitant first steps taken by Jewish traders along the way to Yemen. The itinerant merchants transferred there what they had practised in Lower Egypt for centuries, namely, offering the fine products of the capital’s industry to the clothiers in the provincial towns (which were of far greater economic importance in those days than is reflected in our literary sources).¹¹ ‘Allān proceeded in this way according to the instructions of his uncle; this is evident from the fact that he mentions the names of his customers (all Muslims) in faraway places without any further details. ‘Arūs himself had given the names to him.

When ‘Allān, after examining the situation in Aden, decided to travel to India, he was warned by his cousin Joseph—on the very night before his departure—that ‘Arūs and his partner Sibā‘ disapproved of this plan. However, it is out of the question that ‘Allān should have acted against express orders of his uncle; in this case we would have read eloquent excuses similar to those written by David Maimonides when he was about to board a ship on the way to Aden and India, contrary to the instructions given to him by his elder brother Moses.

I understand the situation as follows. Young merchants, like young warriors, seek adventures.¹² While being sent out, probably not for the first time, on the way to Yemen, where he would skip from one inhospitable port on the Red Sea to another and finally to Aden, selling textiles, he asked his uncle to entrust him also with something special, which could be sold on the international market of Aden with profit and, if not there, in India. ‘Arūs reluctantly agreed and provided ‘Allān with corals and storax, staple exports to the lands of

⁹ The ‘ sister’s son ’ syndrome was a widespread phenomenon in the Geniza society (and its environment), see *ibid.*, iii, 24–6, and *passim*. ‘Allān’s real father was alive as late as the writing of Letter II, see n. 73, below.

¹⁰ The letter, DK (David Kaufmann Collection, Budapest), no. X, is translated in full in *Mediterranean society*, iii, 193–4, and discussed in vol. v (forthcoming), in the section ‘ A personal touch in letters to and from women ’.

¹¹ Economic importance of provincial towns: *ibid.*, iv, 43, and *passim*. For local clothiers in large provincial towns we now have the interesting papyri from the Louvre being treated by Yūsuf Rāghib (at the suggestion of Claude Cahen), see, e.g., Y. Rāghib, ‘ Pour un renouveau de la papyrologie arabe ’, *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, Comptes Rendus, 1984, 69–76.

¹² See the story in Goitein, *Letters*, 255–7, where, during a drinking bout, a youth elicits from his father the sworn promise to send him overseas in that very year. The father, of course, kept his oath. His endeavour to render his son’s overseas business venture as inexpensive as possible makes quite humorous reading for us.

southern Asia.¹³ He probably also reminded him not to minimize the dangers. Joseph, who had got wind of the happenings, concocted the story that the bosses back home had asked him to tell 'Allān not to cross the ocean. But 'Allān, who had not received such an outright order, persisted and, as the subsequent events showed, went on to become a renowned India trader.

In Letter I, 'Allān says that he was travelling to Sindābūr, then the northern port of entry to the pepper country on the Malabar coast of south-west India. His report in Letter II begins with the announcement that he had safely arrived there. However, a considerable number of years must have elapsed between the two letters. The careful and (comparatively) orderly script of Letter I, as was required when a revered person was addressed, had given way to a cursive, as was common between business friends, although here too 'Arūs was the recipient. The quantities of goods and money, such as 72 bales of iron brought from India to Aden, or storage space for 150 sacks of peppers and other spices rented on the boat for the way home (from India), or 1,500 dinars cashed, after customs, in Aden, show 'Allān as an experienced and successful merchant. Moreover, he reports that Bundār b. Ḥasan b. Bundār, the representative of merchants of Aden, personally took care of his affairs. We also possess a letter from Bundār II to 'Allān opening with eight lines of respectful verbiage, but containing only a short, somewhat piqued message: 'Allān had reminded Bundār of a debt of 90 dinars he owed to a common friend. Reminding a person of a debt was almost an insult. That 'Allān dared to do such a thing (which was necessary; Bundār paid), betrays him as being, at some time at least, on familiar terms with that powerful man.¹⁴

Doing business for others was the backbone of overseas trade as we meet it in the Geniza. Naturally, the eastern connexion of the 'Arūs-Sibā' partnership reflected on 'Allān. We read about a merchant from Aleppo, northern Syria (who happened to be a Muslim), and another from Raqqa on the Euphrates, who transported textiles to 'Ullā, the Damascene, who had his seat in Cairo, in order to deliver them to 'Allān before the latter set out on another overseas trip.¹⁵ We also have two huge documents from the years 1116 and 1117 dealing with a small balance owed by 'Allān to 'Ullā from a former voyage and paid by his uncle, since 'Allān himself had already left again for 'the lands of Yemen'.¹⁶

I have called Letter II the pivotal piece of this article because it deals mainly with happenings in, or off the shores of, India, and because such detailed reports are not common in the Geniza. Good manners required that one should not occupy the recipient with the descriptions of one's own misfortunes. In countless letters we find these or similar remarks: 'On this voyage I experienced

¹³ On corals and storax, see nn. 32 and 33, below.

¹⁴ AIU (Library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris), vii, E, 35, 'India Book, Final', ch. 2, no. 12. On (the art of not) paying one's debts see *Mediterranean society*, i, 204–5, 258–9, and *passim*.

¹⁵ TS 12.7, ll. 6–14. On 'Ullā the Damascene see *ibid.*, ii, 78.

This passage about 'Allān is immediately followed by these words: 'Let me know about everything connected with the son of the *brother* (namely, of 'Arūs), may God never bless him. God, the exalted, knows what happened to me in this affair. There is nothing to be done. May God make the end to the good.' The readers who remember what 'Allān reported about his cousin Joseph in Letter I will be inclined to believe that it is he who is meant here.

Finding a merchant from a town on the Euphrates involved in the trade route to India via Egypt might be taken as another sign of the decline of the Iraqi India trade. For the later Middle Ages cf. the remark of Simon Digby on the scarcity in India of coins from the Persian Gulf, *The Cambridge economic history of India*, i, 1982, 126.

¹⁶ R. Gottheil and W. H. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection* (New York, 1927), 1–11, with excellent photographs. 'Allān is referred to in B, l. 3 (where his father's name, Hassūn, is Hebraized to Japheth), l. 24. These manuscripts are now in the Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C.

frightening dangers and other tribulations impossible to compress into the frame of a letter', or 'which to describe would lead too far afield'.¹⁷

Here, however, 'Allān had a special reason to go into details. He had to explain why he had remained away from home for so long. Travel in India itself had become dangerous, and twice, while on the way home, he had had to turn back to India, once from the high sea (when the return trip took twenty days) and once from Aden, when economic considerations were at play.¹⁸ One feels, however, that 'Allān wrote with gusto. By that time, people at home had become familiar with conditions in India and were interested in the happenings there. Moreover, the report about legal procedures and other government care for the foreigners in Kūlam (Quilon), the southernmost port on the Malabar coast (from which one returned to Aden), were reassuring. The feeling of safety at sea while running before a steady monsoon is also implicit in the letter.¹⁹

An entirely different spirit meets us in Letter III, written by 'Allān in 'Aydhab on the west coast of the Red Sea, before embarking again on a boat sailing east. The old man regretted having undertaken the voyage at all and advised his sons not to be on the road all the time (like himself). A family partnership would enable them to spread the exertions between them. He worried also about his firstborn, Zayn al-Dār (who, as a boy, had written the above-mentioned letter, dictated to him by his mother, and who now was himself away on travel).

The script of the letter too calls for comment. The first line is written with a regular pen and in the hand known from Letters I and II. As from the second word of the second line a broad pen and a seemingly different script are used. I believe, however, that 'Allān wrote it, choosing a more fleeting type of cursive, as some merchants used for private accounts and other personal notes. For instance, numerous pages (mostly reverse sides of letters received) were filled by 'Arūs, 'Allān's uncle, in this way. A study of the Hebrew characters, especially the ways they are connected or disconnected, convinced me that 'Allān was the writer.²⁰ In a short note to his children, the old India trader permitted himself to relax.

A question of script draws our attention also with regard to the latest document related to 'Allān that we have thus far found: a long letter to him in beautiful Arabic characters.²¹ It was sent by Khalaf b. Isaac of Aden, a cousin of Bundār II, with whom we found 'Allān in contact on an earlier voyage. We have many letters from the hand of this Khalaf, going both East and West, for instance one to India in summer 1148, over 30 years after the documents from the years 1116–17, when 'Allān was at the height of his activities as a travelling merchant.²² All these letters of Khalaf were written in Hebrew characters with the exception of the letter discussed here and another, consisting of a single page, preserved in Heidelberg, Germany, and treated by Albert Dietrich in a

¹⁷ About this aspect of good manners see *Mediterranean society*, v, section A, 2, (Hard times).

¹⁸ Returning from Aden to India immediately after arrival there is reported also in another letter (namely, of Maḥrūz b. Jacob, an Adenese Jewish shipowner). BM (British Museum) Or 5542, f. 17, and TS 16.345, two copies of same letter in same script (of a clerk).

¹⁹ I am deeply indebted to Dr. Paul Fenton, who, while skimming through the newly created 'Additional Series' of the Taylor-Schechter Collection at the Cambridge University Library (TS AS), came upon the two fragments of which Letter II is composed and put them at my disposal.

²⁰ For instance, the letter *m* is mostly represented by two separate strokes, the second occasionally combined with the next letter.

²¹ To be sure, without diacritical dots, which means, for instance, that the signs for the sounds *b*, *t*, *th*, *y*, *n*, are identical. A reader familiar with the usages of the merchants will incur no great difficulties in deciphering such a letter, with one exception: when it contains names of goods and other technical terms not known to the reader from another source, see n. 23, below.

²² See p. 452, above. The letter from 1148 is preserved in the Library of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and was published by the late E. Strauss-Ashtor in *Zion*, 7, 1941, 148–51.

folio-sized study comprising 67 pages. This was a list of shipments and orders, and therefore required much research in order to identify the goods mentioned.²³ The letter to 'Allān contained much of the same stuff. At some time, Khalaf, a master of Hebrew calligraphy, must have decided to write letters of a certain type in Arabic characters, or ordered a clerk to do so. 'Allān clearly had nothing to do with this change. However, the content of the letter concerned is very significant; it shows us 'Allān, the indefatigable traveller, becoming a stationary merchant.

While visiting the capital of Egypt, Khalaf received from 'Allān 100 dinars with the request to buy oriental imports in 'Aydhāb. If nothing attractive was to be had there, he was to carry the dinars with him to Aden and send whatever he bought for 'Allān there to 'Aydhāb. By the time this letter was written traffic between this Red Sea port and Cairo had become so lively that it was not difficult to find transportation from there to the capital. Here, as in countless similar cases, no remuneration was offered to the buyer for his services. His reward was that his business friend would exert himself for him in a similar way (or had already done so before). Captains, who were familiar with the markets on both ends of their voyages, cultivated as a sideline buying local products for the travellers. Bundār II, as we read in Letter II, strongly objected to this practice: The India trader should see the commodity for himself. Of course, having become a stationary merchant, 'Allān did not have that choice.²⁴

Seeing that 'Allān had at least three sons and that, in his old age, he advised them to form a family partnership, and since they had a worthy model for this in their father's own relationship with the lifelong partners 'Arūs and Sibā' (who were, it seems, also brothers-in-law), I wondered whether the Geniza contained some information about a continuation of this family firm connected with the India trade. For the time being I have not come across data on this point. Now that the question has been raised, an answer may someday appear.

THREE LETTERS

The originals are all in Hebrew characters, but they have been transcribed here into Arabic script for the convenience of the reader. The rules to be observed for such a transcription are succinctly described in *BSOAS*, xvi, 2, 1954, 254, and in greater detail in *Arabic and Islamic studies in honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden, 1965), 272–3.²⁵

Letter I

TS 10 J 16, f. 1

A (١) كتابى الى والدى والعزير على وعندي اطال الله بقاء (٢) وادام عزه وتايده وسعادته وسلامته ونعماءه (٣) ومن حسن توفيقه لا اخلاه وكان له ومعه في جميع (٤) اموره.
B والذي تحب علمه اتي وصلت الى عدن على (٥) جملة السلامة ووجدنا اسواق ان (!) كاسدة ونصيف (٦) الذي معي ما انباع ويبت من المؤنقات من ١/٢ الى ه (٧) الى ١/٢ والمقاطع ٢ ١/٢ وربيع والقوط ١/٢ وربيع الى (٨) ١/٢ اعلمتك ذلك وقد نصت ١٠٠ مثقال وكسور.

²³ Albrecht Dietrich, *Zum drogenhandel im Islamischen Ägypten* (Heidelberg, 1954). The letter of Khalaf partly published in *BSOAS*, xvi, 2, 1954, see n. 2, above, is written in Hebrew characters. It was transcribed into Arabic for the convenience of the readers.

²⁴ Khalaf's letter to 'Allān: ENA NS 2, f. 29, i.e., the Elkan Nathan Adler Collection in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, New Series.

²⁵ My former assistant, Dr. Paula Sanders, now assistant professor at Harvard, transcribed (on New Year's day, 1985) the texts from my Hebrew typescript with her usual vigilance, for which the readers of this journal will certainly be appreciative.

The Syndics of the Cambridge University Library kindly gave permission for the publication of the documents printed here. I am also grateful to the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at the University Library for their good services. See also n. 19, above.

תורה פתח נשם כל מעלה על מעלה וכל מעלה על מעלה
חלל לטהרה ולטהרה בה נחתה ונחתה שמה כל כבוד מלכותו
במקדש כיום כן על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח
נחמד ולא ילך מטהר ומטהר על המזבח סבב כבודו למטהר
בני ישראל כי חקיהם פרה ילך ילך כבודו למטהר על המזבח
למטהר כל ענין על סנין ילך ילך על סנין ילך ילך על סנין ילך
משפחה כבוד פתח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח
חמק ילך למטהר על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח
חמק ילך על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח על המזבח
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LETTER II: recto

[illegible]

recto

The image shows a severely damaged, aged document, possibly a letter or a manuscript. The paper is dark, heavily stained, and has large, irregular tears and missing sections, particularly along the bottom and right edges. The text is written in a cursive script, likely Hebrew or Arabic, and is mostly illegible due to the damage. There are two main columns of text. The right column has a few lines that are more legible than the left column. The left column is mostly obscured by the damage.

The text on the right side, which is more legible, appears to be:

...
 ...
 ...
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The text on the left side is mostly illegible but appears to be a continuation of the same script.

verso

- C (٩) واستخرت الله على سفر سندبور بالمرجان والميعة (١٠) لان ما وجدت هو (!) سوق وكل ما دفعوا لي فيه ١٨ البيعة.
- D (١١) ولا تسال ما فعل معي يوسف جاء ليلة السفر قال (١٢) عمي وسباع قالوا لي لا تسافر البحر وقد (١٣) تسلم مني ٦٥ دينار عن فضة ٢٥ دينار عن ١٠ مقاطع (١٤) و ٣٠ مقطع تسلمها.
- E وبقيّة حساب الـ ٧٠ مثقال ١٠ (١٥) مثاقيل بعنا بها اكسيا (!) في دهلج على سراج (١٦) بالاخذ حتى نرجع في الكارم ابعت عليه (١٧) اكسية بـ ٤ مثقال وايضا في باضع على ابن (١٨) ناجي اكسيا (!) ٤ مثاقيل وايضا في سواكن على عبد (١٩) الرازق . . . ٢٠ مثقال اكسيا (!) والرقع بخطهم معي (٢٠) الى ان نرجع بالسلامة ونستوفي ان شاء الله.
- F وقد (٢١) جلس يوسف في لجة مع **אלוונות** [البغايا] والصحبة واحد (٢٢) امرد يس[قيهم] .

verso

العنوان

אבנא מארי [الى ابي ومولاي] عروس **בר** [بن] يوسف
 حفيظه [=حفيده] **עלל בר** حسون
 זל
 اطال الله بقاءه وادام عزه

Letter II: recto

TS AS 156.237 recto

- A [.....] (١) نحوه فكان عندي بالمثل (٢) حلول السلامة والعافية بساحته وجمع الشمل به بجوده فاما ما [ضمن] (٣) كتابه الكريم من التشوق الى الاجتماع فعندي من ذلك اكبر جزؤ واعلى (٤) نصيب والى الله تعالى تجتمع الامور.
- B سبب كتابي لحضرته اعلامه ما (٥) جرى على في هذه السفرة وذلك اني كنت اعلمته في الكتب الذي [تقدمت] (٦) لحضرته بالصفر (!) الى سندابور وحب الله بالسلامة والوصول الى الم. ر. (?) وقد (٧) اشتريت بما فتح الله تعالى وهو المقدار الذي ذكرته لك بالكتب (٨) متقدمة واردنا الخروج الى عدن فوقع في البلد الفتنة والسياف (٩) وهرب جميع [من] في البلد وطل[ب] الناه[د] ده الذي هو على ناوك ان يهرب فانكشف لي

TS AS 156.238 recto

- (١) [.....] فلم يصدقني واشحننا الـ (٢) قاش والحديد بالليل لان مانعه في يده وهربنا الى فاكتور وقد تركت (٣) عند يعقوب ابن ثابت بعض فلفل وبعض سنبل وتغاريق ان (!) كثير ووصلنا (٤) الى فاكتور ونزل على ناوك سكن في فاكتور ومضينا بالمركب الى كولم (٥) وتوهنا في كولم.
- C فلما كان ليل الـ اشحنا واقلعنا قبل النهروز (!) ٣٥ (٦) يوم وكان الناهده قد تمارض في البلد واقلعنا في البحر ١٠ ايام (٧) ووقعنا في پشت ان (!) كبير على ماء ه ابواع ولم ندرى انه الفال او غيره (٨) وحب الله بالسلامة واقتنع الناهده ومات ورميناه في البحر وبقي (٩) المركب ليس هو (!) راس ولا وليس معنو [معنا] رفاع وكانت امة في الـ (١٠) مركب فخافت ان تخرج (!) الى ارض العرب يستهلك المركب وان رجعنا الى (١١) بلاد الهند ثم ايضا كذلك وغلبونا وردونا الى كولم وايسنا من اموالنا (١٢) فبعد ٢٠ يوم وصلنا الى كولم وهو الموضع الذي كنا نخاف منه وحب (١٣) الله بالفرج القريب.
- D فدخلوا (?) الـ والـ والكاردار وقبضوا (١٤) هذا المركب منا وقروا حقوقه الى صاحبه كل ذلك خوفا من على ناوك (١٥) وزودونا بالماء والحطب وركبوا معنا ناخذتين اثنتين وكتبوا لنا

Letter II: verso

TS AS 156.238 verso

- (١) خطوطهم واقلعنا
 E ووصلنا الى عدن باقرب عهد قبل المراكب كلها وابعت الـ (٢) حرير بيع ان (!) طيب سعر ٢٠

البهار وكان معي ٧٢ بهار و ٥٥ قطعة و ٣٠ من (٣) س . . . ٤٠ من قرنفل وقد تحصل لي بعد العشور الف وخمس مائة دينار (٤) [و]تفاريق ان (!) كثير و اردت الخروج فوجدت الفلفل ٣٥ دينار البهار فا (٥) امكني ان اغيب هذه المدة واشترى الفلفل من عدن وقد استخرت الله (٦) على السفر الى فاكفور في المركب الذي وصلت فيه لانه علي مبارك وقد (٧) اكترت منهم على ١٥٠ بهار ١٠٠ فلفل ٥٠ تفاريق واكرت منهم ١٠٠ بهار (٨) اكتره ٩٠ مثقال ضرب عدن وقد اشرط لي عليهم الشيخ علي ابن الكوفي وال (٩) شيخ بNDAR ان لا اسلم لهم درهم الا اشترى انا الى روعي .
 F وقد انفذت لمولاي (١٠) صحبة الشيخ ابو الكرم والشيخ ابو السرور ثلث اعدال بقم وايضا ٢٧ (١١) دينار غير ربع ملكية للمكوس (?) و . . . لالس و ٥٥ فجرية [=فرجية] حمر وحصور [=وحصر] (١٢) علة (?) وقلادة خرز سيلي اعلمتك ذلك وايضا صحبة الشيخ ابو الحسين زيد (١٣) ابن ابو منصور الاسكندراني ١٠ ثواب لالس اعلمتك ذلك تختص ال (١٤) سلام واهل البيت السلام والشيخ ابو اصحق السلام وابو نصر السلام (١٥) . . . ومن تشمله عنايتك (١٦) السلام.

TS AS 156.237 verso

(١) الشيخ (٢) السلام الكتاب وشلومך יגדל ואל ידל (٣)
 وتاريخ الكتاب في يوم الاربعة (٩) ٢٩ من آب.
 العنوان.

(٤) الشيخ الاجل مولاي عروس بن يوسف ذلّا عيده جعل فداء علا [] (علا او علان)
 (٥) اطال الله بقاءه وادام عزه ونعماه ابن حسون סח

Letter III

TS 8 J 17, f. 15

A (١) كتابي هذه (!) لاولادي العزيزين علي وعز [دي اطال] (٢) الله بقاءهم وادام عزهم وسل [امتهم]
 (٣) وسعادتهم ونعماهم وكان لهم [ومعهم] (٤) في جميع امورهم.
 B اعلمكم ان [وصلت] (٥) الى قوس (!) بحمد الله على جملة السلامة (٦) وقد اقترقت من الصبي الذي كان معي (٧) ابن الدلالا (!) وخلصت منه خلاص تام (٨) لانه ردى قليل الدين وقد اكرت (٩) مع يحيى ونحن على السفر الى ال (١٠) سعة ما وصل احد الى عيذاب (!) [=عيذاب] (١١) وما وصلوا في هذه الكارم الله (١٢) الوكيل يجمع بيننا على خير برحمة (١٣) وبعل . . . ياولادي (!) احياكم الله وجعنا (١٤) على خير بعد قضا الحوايج.
 C كنت (١٥) خرجت في سفرى ولو علمت ان (١٦) يلحقني منكم بعض هذه الوحش (?) (١٧) ما كنت سافرت ويكن ما يكون ال (١٨) امر الى الله. تختصوا كلكم باتم ال [سلم].

Margin

وآلتكم افضل السلم وتحفظوا [بعضكم بعض] ושחפּוּ [=وتشتركوا] ان فيه.

Top of page

توفيقكم | وتخص | ابو سعد | وعمه | افضل | السلم | وامه.

verso

(١) جيراننا افضل السلام واحب تكتبوا لي (٢) بسلام ولدى زين الدار وقد وصلوا الناس (٣) ولم نرى منكم كتاب اشغل ذلك قلب [ي] (٤) كثير وشلום.

العنوان

يصل هذا ال [كتاب الى دار عروس بن يوسف
 يسلم] لدار اللوى תוצבה بلغ توجر

LETTER I

'Allān b. Ḥassūn, still a novice in the India trade, writes from Aden to his uncle and father-in-law 'Arūs b. Joseph in Fustat, Egypt TS 10 J 16, f. 1, 'India Book, Old', 143; 'Final', ch. 6, no. 11

A. Introduction

I am writing to you, my father,²⁶ who is dear to me and with me, may God prolong his life and make permanent his honoured position, his support and help,²⁷ his safety and well-being, may he never leave him without full success,²⁸ and may he be for him and with him in all his undertakings.

B. Prices in Aden

What you wish to know: I arrived safely in Aden, but found the markets to be dull. Half of what I had with me was not sold. The modish garments²⁹ sold for $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ *mithqāls* [Egyptian dinars], the *maqṭa's*³⁰ for $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$, the saris [*fūṭās*] for $1\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$. Please take notice. One hundred *mithqāls* and some singles were cashed for these.

C. Decision to travel to India

Having sought God's guidance, I decided to travel to Sindābūr³¹ with the corals and storax,³² for I did not find a market for it [meaning the corals]; all they offered me for it [in Aden] was 18 [dinars] per selling unit.³³

D. Arrangements with Joseph, another nephew of 'Arūs

Do not ask what Joseph did to me. He came to me during the night before my departure and said: 'My paternal uncle ['Arūs] and Sibā'³⁴ told me that you should not travel on the ocean.' He took from me 65 dinars for silver³⁵, 25 dinars for 10 *maqṭa's*, and 30 *maqṭa's*, which he took with him.

²⁶ *Wālidī*, literally the one who begot me.

²⁷ The support and help granted by God.

²⁸ Success, mainly in the fulfilment of God's commandments.

²⁹ *Ar. al-mu'niqāt*, not found by me elsewhere in the Geniza.

³⁰ A robe mostly made in Alexandria, see *Mediterranean society*, iv, 7 and Index to vol. iv, *passim*, s.v. robe.

³¹ Around 1100 Sindābūr was a port on the northern tip of the pepper country on the west coast of India (near the once Portuguese town of Goa). See the map in Idrīsī, *India*, tr. Maqbūl Ahmad (Leiden, 1960) (at the end of the book). Its exact location seems to be in doubt, see M. H. Nainar, *The knowledge of India possessed by the Arab geographers* etc. (Madras, 1942), 73 (n. 146)–75, and *passim*, see p. 233, s.v.; and George M. Moraes, 'Sindābūr of the Arab writers', *Journal of Indian History*, 10, 1931, 191–5. The article is instructive because the author seems to have known the country well.

It should be noted that, thus far, I have found the place-name Sindābūr in the Geniza only in the letters of 'Allān b. Ḥassūn. During the second quarter of the twelfth century, from which we have a great mass of Geniza letters and documents, there is no mention of Sindābūr.

³² Storax, *may'a*, an aromatic resin obtained from trees in Asia Minor, used in perfume and medicine, a common commodity exported via Alexandria, Cairo, and Aden to India, as proved by the Geniza letters.

³³ Corals were sold wholesale (by the thousands) in 'selling units', *bay'a*; storax, both the fluid and the solid, in *mann* (a weight of approximately two pounds). Therefore, 'it' refers here to the corals. Cf. ULC (University Library Cambridge) Add. 3418 and 3421, 'India Book, Final', ch. 1, nos. 1–2, ll. 19–21, *verso*, l. 1), where storax and corals, both Mediterranean products, were sent together to India. In that document (dated 1097) too 'Arūs provides the storax. In TS 8 J 19, f. 26, l. 13 (late eleventh century) 'the merchants from Yemen' come to Alexandria to buy storax.

³⁴ Sibā', the (perhaps senior) partner of 'Arūs, see p. 450 above.

³⁵ Most probably silver vessels of Egyptian manufacture, such as were sent to India according to other Geniza sources.

E. Previous sales in ports on the west coast of the Red Sea

As to the balance of the 70 *mithqāls*:³⁶ for 10 *mithqāls* I sold cloaks³⁷ in Dahlak³⁸ to Sirāj on condition that I would take the money at my return with the al-Kārim flotilla.³⁹ I sold him [also] cloaks for 40 *mithqāls*; and also in Bāde⁴⁰ I sold to Ibn Nājī cloaks for 4 *mithqāls*, and in Suwākin⁴¹ to 'Abd al-Rāziq cloaks for 20 *mithqāls*. The promissory notes signed by them will be with me until I return safely and receive these sums in full, if God wills.

F. The sinful senior cousin Joseph

Joseph stays in Lakhba⁴² with the *whores* (Heb.), 'the company', and a beardless youth, who ser[ves them drinks].⁴³

Verso, Address

To my father and lord,

'Arūs, son of Joseph, (*may he*)

r(est in) E(den).

May God prolong his life and

make his honoured position permanent.

(from) his scion

'Allāl,⁴⁴ son of

Ḥassūn

³⁶ All the ports mentioned in what follows are south of the main Red Sea port 'Aydhāb. 'Allān's main sales were certainly effected there, and reports about them were sent to 'Arūs. The 'balance of 70 *mithqāls*' means the remaining garments worth that sum. Actually, 'Allān cashed a total of 74 *mithqāls*.

³⁷ Ar. *aksīyā*, sc. *kisā*, male outer garment, which could serve also as a night cover.

³⁸ Dahlak, still in existence, see *EI* (2nd ed.), II, 90–1. Often mentioned in Geniza letters as a port on the southern section of the west coast of the Red Sea; also as the seat of a petty ruler engaged in piracy.

³⁹ All customers in these places bear Muslim names. Wholesale business was usually conducted on credit, deferment of payment granted often for a considerable stretch of time, as here, see *Mediterranean society*, I, 197 ff. For *Kārim* see *EI* (2nd ed.), IV, 640–3, and Goitein, *Studies*, 352–60. The Geniza letters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries speak only of 'the *Kārim*', almost never of a 'Kārimī merchant'. In those early times, it seems, the *Kārim* was an organization for maritime transport (like a caravan on land) rather than a commercial 'Hansa', as it became later, especially in Mamlūk times.

⁴⁰ Bāde', a small barter centre for African goods, already in ruins at the time of Yāqūt (c. 1228), *Geographisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1866), I, 471, but repeatedly occurring in the Geniza. For its location see J. S. Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London, 1952), 50 ff.

⁴¹ Suwākin (for Sawākin), still in existence; in Geniza times a frequently visited southern port on the west coast of the Red Sea.

⁴² Lakh(a)ba, a place near Aden, renowned in the Geniza for its glass (and bricks); see also Oscar Löffgren, *Arabische Texte zur Kenntnis der Stadt Aden im Mittelalter* (Uppsala, 1936), 21–2, 54.

⁴³ The word 'whores' was written in Hebrew so that it would not be understood by everyone. As has been so often described by Arab and Hebrew poets, the company of revellers is served wine by an unbarred youth, who should not necessarily be regarded as an object of homosexual overtures. Wine was sacred in Jewish ritual; only wine prepared and preserved under special supervision could be consumed. The profligate cousin, 'Allān wishes to emphasize, cared as little for ritual as for morality. The last line: *wa-aḥad* (l. 22) *amrad yus(qāhim)*, 'serving them drinks'. Here followed the concluding greetings.

⁴⁴ 'Allān describes himself as *ḥafīd* 'grandson' or 'descendant' of 'Arūs, meaning that he regards him as his physical progenitor, see n. 26, above. In Arabic 'my brother from father and mother' means 'not related, but very dear'.

The strange spelling of *ḥafīd* as *ḥafīz* has its cause in the pronunciation of classical Hebrew *d* as *dh* after a vowel. The sounds *z* and *dh* had a number of variables, see Joshua Blau, *The emergence and linguistic background of Judaeo-Arabic* (Oxford, 1965), 76. For *q* = *z* = *dh* see Letter III, I. 10: 'Aydhāb for 'Aydhāb.

'Allān calls himself 'Allāl (as some other 'Allāns did occasionally), a form of endearment, imitating the speech of small children. He says to his father-in-law, 'Although braving the Indian ocean, I am still your baby 'Allāl, obedient to your instructions.' We do not meet this usage in his later letters.

LETTER II

'Allān at the height of his exploits, writing from Aden after his return from India and immediately setting out for India again.

TS AS 156.237 and 238

A. *End of the Introduction.*

TS AS 156.237, ll. 1–4

[Your servant took notice of . . . and your yearning] for him, a feeling shared by me. [May God ordain that] prosperity and health prevail in your court and grant in his grace that I be united with you. As to what you have m[entioned] in your kind letter about your longing to meet me, I have an even larger part and a greater share of this. In God all matters are united.

B. Travel to Sindābūr and other places in India. Because of riots and bloodshed the ship could not sail to Aden. In Fāknūr the captain disappeared, but the ship continued to Kūlam, where it stayed for some time.

TS AS 156.237, l. 4–TS AS 156.238, l. 5

The reason for writing this letter is to tell your excellency what happened to me on this voyage. In my p[revious] letters to your excellency I informed you about my travel to Sindābūr.⁴⁵ God granted me safety, I finally arrived in Al-M . . . r⁴⁶ and bought what God, the exalted, made available, to the extent reported in my previous letters.

We intended, on our way home, to travel to Aden,⁴⁷ but riots and bloodshed occurred, and [who]ever was in the town⁴⁸ fled. The [shipmas]ter, namely, 'Alī Nāwak,⁴⁹ wan[t]ed also to flee, but I discovered this . . . (between 156.237 and 238 something, probably less than one line, is missing) [and informed X. about it],⁵⁰ but he did not believe me. We loaded the textiles and the iron during the night, for he (Nāwak) had the power to keep us back [by refusing to sail]. Finally, we all fled to Fāknūr.⁵¹ I had left some of the pepper and many of the

⁴⁵ For Sindābūr see Letter I, n. 31.

⁴⁶ Only Al-m . . . r is visible. Something like Munaybār-Manībār-Malibār (Malabar, the pepper country on the southern section of the west coast of India) must have been written. The use of the article is strange, but perhaps it was meant to express the idea of both city and region. The plural Malibārāt in *Letters*, p. 64, n. 10, might be understood similarly. The situation is clear. The merchants travelled from Sindābūr, the northern port leading to the pepper country via a place called Manībār to Fāknūr (TS AS 156.238, ll. 2–4), a capital city in the Malabar country, and from there to Kūlam-Kawlam, the southernmost port on the Malabar Coast (sections C and D), from where they planned to return to Aden. For Kūlam or Kawlam (later called by the Europeans Quilon) see Nainar, *The knowledge of India* (cf. Letter I, n. 31), 44–8, also *EI* (2nd ed.), v, 360; for Malibār, see Nainar, *ibid.*, 56–59. I spell Kūlam, as in the *EI* (2nd ed.), although *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (the Spanish Jewish traveller, ed. M. N. Adler, London, 1907) Heb. sec., p. 58, has *Q'wlm*, which shows that Benjamin had heard the name pronounced Kawlam, as found also in several Arab geographers, see Nainar, 230. G. R. Tibbets, *Arab navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese* (London, 1971), 202 and 582, has only Kūlam.

⁴⁷ *Ar. aradnā al-khurūj ilā 'Adan*. In Geniza Arabic *khurūj* means setting out for home.

⁴⁸ The town Al-m . . . r, discussed in n. 46, above.

⁴⁹ Nāwak (a Persian word, meaning arrow) clearly was a prominent personality on the Malabar coast (see the first paragraph in sec. D) and was known even to the family back in Cairo.

⁵⁰ [] An educated guess. In the original manuscript one or two more words in this line might be decipherable.

⁵¹ For Fāknūr, see Nainar, *The knowledge of India*, 33–34, and n. 46, above. This spelling is confirmed by our 'Allān, who mentions it in this letter four times. Tibbets, *Arab navigation*, 200 and 576 has a short *a*, but his main sources are later by centuries than 'Allān and the Arab geographer noted by Nainar. Yohanan Friedmann, 'Qīṣṣat Shakarwatī Farmād,' *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5, 1975, 239, spells Fākanūr.

smaller items with Jacob Ibn Thābit.⁵² We arrived in Fāknūr, where 'Alī Nāwak disembarked and remained, while we went on in the same ship to Kūlam⁵³ and stayed there for some time.

C. Ten days after leaving Kūlam the ship encountered a dangerous sea, the captain died, and a vociferous crowd on board forced the ship back to Kūlam, where it arrived after another twenty days.

TS AS 156.238, ll. 5–13

When the night of . . . arrived, we loaded and set sail, 35 days before 'New Year'.⁵⁴ The captain had been ill while still in town, but we sailed for ten days. When we encountered a large *pusht* (a reef, or another underwater obstacle), water being five fathoms high, and did not know whether this was the Fāl (the northern end of the Laccadive Islands) or not,⁵⁵ God granted us safety, but the captain had a stroke and died. We threw his body overboard into the sea. So the boat remained without a commander and a . . . , and we had no charts.⁵⁶ A crowd in the ship was afraid the ship would be lost, if it landed in an Arab country.⁵⁷ However, if we returned to India, there too the same might happen. They got the upper hand and returned us to Kūlam. We gave up hope of saving our goods. After twenty days we arrived in Kūlam, the place we feared. But God granted us delivery immediately.

D. In Kūlam the ship was returned to its proprietor. Another one was provided with water and wood, and its two captains signed documents specifying their obligations towards the passengers.

TS AS 156.238, l. 5–v, l. 1

The . . . , the . . . , and the manager⁵⁸ came on board and took the ship from

⁵² Jacob, not Ya'qūb, a Jewish merchant. The combination Thābit b. Jacob is repeatedly found in Rabbanite (TS 16.33, [1044/5]) and Karaite (TS NS 320, f. 34) marriage contracts, but not in connexion with the India trade.

⁵³ For Kūlam see n. 46, above.

⁵⁴ 'New Year', text: *al-nahrūz*, for the more common *nawrūz*, or *nayrūz*, the original Persian New Year, partly accepted by Muslim governments for administrative purposes. According to *Wüstenfeld-Mahlersche Vergleichungs-tabellen*, ed. Berthold Spuler (Wiesbaden, 1961), 38, in around 1100, Nawrūz would have fallen on February 20 according to the Julian (or 'Old') calendar, and a few days later according to our present (Gregorian or 'New') calendar. The writer wishes to emphasize that they set sail at an exceptionally early date. March 1st was regarded as still safe for sailing westward from the Malabar coast according to Ibn Mājid's nautical handbook translated by Tibbets, *Arab navigation*, 375.

⁵⁵ *Pusht*. Arabic does not possess a letter for the sound *p*, but Hebrew does. I have little doubt that the word is Persian *pusht* (back, hump) and was pronounced thus by the passengers. Tibbets, *Arab navigation*, lists the word, of course, under *fusht*, p. 537, where further references are provided.

The northern end of the Laccadive Islands, south-west of India, situated on the same geographical latitude as Mangalore, was called *ra's (Cape) al-fāl* and was notorious for its reefs, see Tibbets, *ibid.*, 459.

⁵⁶ Ar. *riqā'*, a word with many meanings. Astronomical tables guiding the seafarer were well known, cf. Tibbets, *ibid.*, 29–33. An experienced captain, like the one buried at sea, as reported here, could perhaps do without them.

⁵⁷ Since no shipmaster was on board, the goods carried could be declared derelict and be confiscated by the local ruler.

⁵⁸ The third of the three officials who examined the witnesses regarding the proprietorship of the boat in which 'Allān had travelled bore the Persian title *kārdār*, manager, found also in other Geniza papers. The first two had Indian names. I hope that a scholar familiar with Indian legal and administrative terminology will be able to decipher them. We know so little about the organization of the Indian overseas trade from the Indian side around 1100 that every new insight is welcome. It should be noted that the Spanish Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela (Engl. tr., p. 64) reports this about Kūlam: 'They are honest in their dealings. When merchants arrive from distant countries and enter the port, *three of the King's scribes* come, list their names, and present them to the King,

us, confirming its rights to its proprietor, being afraid of 'Alī Nāwak.⁵⁹ They provided us with water and wood. Two captains travelled with us, after they had signed documents (confirming their obligations) towards us, and we set sail.⁶⁰

E. Having set sail earlier than usual, the ship arrived in Aden prior to all others with the result that 'Allān sold his goods for excellent prices. Learning that pepper in Aden cost 35 dinars a sack—a price far too high for the town—'Allān decided to return immediately to India on the same ship and rented storage space for 150 sacks of pepper and other spices for the voyage back.

TS AS 156.238v, ll. 1–9

We arrived in Aden in the shortest possible time, prior to all others. I sold the iron for a good price, 20 dinars a *bahār*.⁶¹ I had with me 72 *bahārs* and 50 separate pieces, 30 mann *saqat*,⁶² and 40 mann clove. After customs I had obtained 1,500 dinars [and] a lot in other currencies.

I had planned to travel home, but learned that a *bahār* of pepper cost 35 dinars (in Aden). I could not tarry so long until I could buy pepper in Aden (for a reasonable price).⁶³ Having sought God's guidance, I decided to travel to Fāknūr in the same boat in which we had arrived, for it had been blessed for me. I rented from them storage space for 150 *bahārs*, 100 for pepper and 50 for

whereupon the latter makes himself responsible for their property even when it is left in the open without a guardsman.' Benjamin, as far as we know, never reached India, but rather made inquiries about it while in Iraq. His note about the three officials welcoming the foreign merchants arriving in Kūlam proves that 'Allān's experience was nothing uncommon. Even the family back in Cairo was familiar with the titles of those officials. [Professor Goitein questioned several scholars about the two Indian words in this passage. Professor David Shulman, head of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University, responded with the following suggestion regarding the second word; his letter arrived after Professor Goitein's death. Reading the consonants *tyrwly* following the definite article, Professor Shulman writes: 'The possibility [exists] that the word is related to Tamil *tiruvali*, "signet ring", attested at least from 10th–11th cs., so that the official mentioned in the Genizah fragment might conceivably be the bearer of such a ring (which lent its name to the office). It's just a guess.' The reading *tyrwly* looks quite likely, and with Professor Shulman's kind permission, we have included his suggestion here. (M. R. C.)]

⁵⁹Nāwak (see n. 49 above) was perhaps not the proprietor of the boat, but his testimony concerning it was accepted, although the passengers might have had some doubts concerning its truth.

⁶⁰Following the dire experience with the dead captain, the travellers wanted to be protected against a similar occurrence, and also against a flight of the captain in times of danger, as Nāwak had done, see sec. B above. Two captains are also mentioned elsewhere.

⁶¹Twenty (20) *maliki* or Adenese dinars for a *bahār* (c. 300 pounds) was a very good price. In another letter Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan b. Bundār, 'representative of the merchants of Aden to all rulers of the Land and the Seas,' *nāẓir* or overseer of its port, and Head of the Jews of Yemen, informs Abraham Ben Yijū in India that practically all types of iron imported to Aden had been sold out; he expected a very good year for refurbished iron, *muhdath*, in the next year, reaching a price of perhaps 20 (local) dinars or more. He advises Abraham of this and asks him also to inform other business friends, mentioned by name, two Hindus and one Muslim, of the situation. (In the same letter a Christian, 'Abd al-Masīh, 'Servant of Jesus', the deacon, transports presents from Maḍmūn to Ben Yijū.) As the fragments preserved show, Abraham had received two copies of this letter. Since paper was scarce in India, he clipped some blank space out of one of them and used it for notes on his own dealings in Aden, made for a business friend, most likely in the year following Maḍmūn's letter. But for 10½ *bahārs* of 'refurbished' iron, he got only 17 dinars per *bahār*, and for two other *bahārs*, 18 dinars. For pepper too Maḍmūn's calculations were off the mark. He expected that the price would be 30 dinars per *bahār*. Ben Yijū received only 24 (which, however, was not bad). Maḍmūn's letter is translated in my 'The India trade of the High Middle Ages in the light of the Cairo Geniza' (in preparation = 'India Book, Final'), ch. 2, nos. 13–15, Ben Yijū's notes *ibid.*, ch. 3, no. 28.

⁶²[The word is damaged in the text (see facsimile). Professor Goitein, in his own transcription, has s In his English translation he supplied *saqat* (spices and seasonings; see *Letters*, p. 113. n. 7). M. R. C.]

⁶³For Aden a price of 35 (local) dinars for a sack of pepper was far too high, see n. 61. 'Allān could not waste his time waiting for the next seafaring season.

various other goods. For the 100 *bahārs* for pepper, I paid 90 *mithqals* of Adenese coinage.⁶⁴ Sheikh 'Alī Ibn al-Kūfī⁶⁵ and Sheikh Bundār⁶⁶ had stipulated with them (the captains) for me that I would not pay them a dirhem until I had bought the pepper myself.

F. *Notes about brazilwood, clothing, and ornaments sent to the family. Greetings.*

TS AS 156.238v, ll. 9–14

I sent with Sheikh Abū 'l-Karam and Sheikh Abū 'l-Surūr three loads of brazilwood⁶⁷ and with them 27 less a quarter Maliki dinars for the custom duties and . . . made of *lālas*,⁶⁸ 50 red *furjiyyas* (robes open in the front) in mats,⁶⁹ and . . . a necklace made of Sīlī (Ceylon?) beads. Please take note of this.⁷⁰

Also with Sheikh Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Zayd Ibn Abū Maṣṣūr, the Alexandrian, ten *lālas* robes. Take note.

Accept my greetings.⁷¹ And greetings to the family [the writer's wife], to Sheikh Abū Iṣḥāq and to Abū Naṣr . . . and all those you care about.

TS AS 156.237v

1. Sheikh . . .

2. . . ., *May your well being increase and never diminish.*

3. The date of this letter is Wednesday, 29th Āb.⁷²

In a larger script: Right Side:

4. To the illustrious Sheikh, my lord 'Arūs, son of Joseph (*may he*) *r(est in E(den))*

5. May God prolong his life and make his honoured position and welfare permanent.

⁶⁴ Renting storage space in Aden in a boat for the return trip from Fāknūr, India and planning even to pay for it in advance shows that traffic between the two places was rather congested, but reveals also that the travellers regarded those protracted voyages as comparatively safe.

⁶⁵ Probably called thus not because he was a native of the city of Kūfa in Iraq (which by that time had become a rarely mentioned inland town, see *EI* (2nd ed.), v, 348), but because his father dealt in Kūfī iron, one of the six or seven types of iron mentioned in the Geniza letters referring to the India trade.

⁶⁶ Bundār b. Ḥasan b. Bundār, the elder brother of Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan, see n. 61 above, who died long before Maḍmūn, but occupied at the time of this letter a position similar to that in which the latter succeeded him. A short letter of this Bundār addressed to our 'Allān b. Ḥassūn is translated in 'India Book Final': ch. 2, no. 12.

'Allān had intended to pay the shipmaster in advance, expecting that a part of the pepper would be purchased by the latter, but had been dissuaded from this by the two experienced overseas traders.

⁶⁷ *Baqqam*, brazilwood, bois de campêche, a dyeing material and major item in the international trade between India, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain, see *Mediterranean society*, i, 532, and E. Ashtor, *Histoire des prix . . . dans l'Orient médiéval* (Paris, 1969), p. 145, nn. 3–10 (where the dinars mentioned were of different values). *Baqqam* was preferred to specie because it could be converted by the recipient into the local currency more profitably.

⁶⁸ *Lālas*, an Indian red silk, exported to the West both as clothing, as here, or as material. Common in the Geniza, but for gifts more than in trade. The 50 red *furjiyyas*, probably also made of *lālas*, mentioned in the following, were destined like the *baqqam* for the maintenance of the writer's family. The robes might have been manufactured also of cotton, another common export from India in those days.

⁶⁹ By oversight, 'Allān wrote *furjiyya* for *furjiyya*. Mats, *ḥuṣur* (text has *ḥuṣūr*), perhaps the strong type imported from Berbera, Somalia, often mentioned as packing materials for shipments from Aden to India.

⁷⁰ This often repeated phrase means simply: 'Finished, I am going over to another topic.'

⁷¹ Such completely uncommon brevity (cf. the beginning!) is to be explained by the simple fact that the writer had arrived at the end of the page, and paper was scarce.

⁷² Āb, approximately August, both according to the lunar-solar general (originally Christian) and Jewish calendars. I believe 'Allān had the former in mind.

Left side:

His servant, may he become his ransom, 'Allā[ī] (or: 'Allā[n]), son of Ḥasūn (may his) e(nd be) g(ood)⁷³

LETTER III

Writing to his sons, 'Allān reports that he had dismissed his travelling companion and chosen another one, and that no one, not even in the Kārim flotilla, had arrived in 'Aydhāb. He regrets having undertaken the voyage and advises his sons to form a partnership between them.

TS 8 J 17, f. 15, 'India Book, Old', 380; 'Final', ch. 6, no. 15

A. Proemium

This my letter is for you, my children, so dear to me and with [me, may] God [prolong] your life and make your honoured position, wellfare], happiness, and prosperity permanent, and be for you [and with you] in all your affairs.

B. The writer's whereabouts and circumstances

Please take note that [I arrived] in Qūs(!) safely and parted company with the young man who was with me, Ibn al-Dallāla (the son of the Female Broker),⁷⁴ and got rid of him completely. He is a bad person with little religion.⁷⁵ I rented a space (in a boat)⁷⁶ with Yaḥyā,⁷⁷ and we are ready to depart. But up till now no one has arrived in 'Aydhāb,⁷⁸ not even in this year's al-Kārim flotilla.⁷⁹ God is trusted to bring us together well in his mercy and . . . , Oh my children, may he keep you alive and bring us together well after successful completion of our (that is: my) affairs.

C. Regret at having undertaken this voyage. Greetings

I have set out for this voyage, but had I known what I would suffer from yearning after you, I would not have travelled, but come what may, the decisions are God's.⁸⁰

Accept the most perfect greetings, you and your families (wives), take good care of one another, and *form a partnership*;⁸¹ in this there will be your success.

⁷³ Aramaic *sāfē tāv*, a blessing for an old man. 'Allān's father probably had remained in Tunisia. Otherwise greetings would have been extended to him.

⁷⁴ As the continuation shows, this letter was actually written in the seaport of 'Aydhāb. The reference to Qūs means: upon arriving in Qūs I parted company with 'the son of the female broker'. Qūs, at that time the main city of Upper Egypt, is often mentioned in the Geniza as the emporium from which the merchants coming up the Nile from the Mediterranean area joined caravans for the dangerous passage to 'Aydhāb, through a waterless desert infested by highwaymen. In the great tradition of French urbanism, every aspect of the history of Qūs—general, socioeconomic, archaeological, literary—has been described by Jean-Claude Garcin in his voluminous *Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale: Qūs* (Cairo, 1976).

Female brokers were very common in Geniza times, see *Mediterranean society*, I, 161, and III, 330, mostly of low, but sometimes of high rank. About the important institution of the *rafīq*, or travelling companion, see *ibid.*, I, 347–8, and *passim*.

⁷⁵ 'Religion' is meant here not in its ritual, but moral sense.

⁷⁶ Travelling companions were supposed to stay together in one place, a kind of cabin, or a screened space, where their goods were stationed; on or between them they accommodated themselves.

⁷⁷ Yaḥyā 'May he live' was a common name. It seems, however, that here Yaḥyā al-Fāṣī (family name, derived from Fez, Morocco), who was in close contact with 'Arūs b. Joseph, is meant.

⁷⁸ For the spelling of the name see Letter I, n. 44.

⁷⁹ For travel to Aden or India one used the ships of the Kārimis arriving from there.

⁸⁰ The decision to travel was inspired by God.

⁸¹ He uses here the Hebrew word *shūthāfūth* (thus was the word spelled in Geniza times), see *Mediterranean society*, I, p. 170 and n. 2; but I do not believe he wanted to say 'according to Jewish law' (*ibid.*, p. 171 and n. 3), but simply before a Jewish notary or court.

Convey the most excellent greetings to Abū Sa'd, to his paternal uncle and to his mother;⁸² also to our neighbours. Please write to me about the well-being of my son Zayn al-Dār.⁸³ The travellers have arrived here, but I did not notice any letters from you, which disquieted [my] mind very much.

And Peace.

Address, right side:

[This letter should arrive] at the house of 'Arūs b. Joseph [and be given] to the house⁸⁴ of the Levi-*m(ay his) s(oul) be b(ounded up) in the b(undle of life)*⁸⁵

Deliver and you will be rewarded!⁸⁶

⁸² 'Allān's letter was addressed to the grown-up sons, but 'excellent' greetings were extended to little Abū Sa'd, to make him proud that even in faraway 'Aydhāb he was not forgotten. 'His mother' is the writer's wife, 'his paternal uncle', 'Allān's brother-in-law. Polite letter writing required that persons should be mentioned with their relationship to the recipient, not the writer.

⁸³ *Zayn* 'ornament' was an often found composite for a name given at birth. A boy belonging to the merchant class would be called *zayn al-tujjār* 'Ornament of the merchants', one borne into a family of government officers—*zayn al-kuttāb* 'Ornament of the clerks'. Naturally, in female names *zayn* was even more common, and *zayn al-dār* 'Ornament of the house' was of course a woman, as we see for instance in TS 13 J 7, f. 16, l. 18, where a woman by that name is referred to; or in TS 20.5, *passim*, where the virgin Zayn al-Dār marries. Our Zayn al-Dār got this name probably during a dangerous illness when he received it to mislead the Angel of Death. When the angel was sent to fetch 'Allān's son, he discovered that it was a girl. Even more so: while writing the letter of his mother to his father, Zayn reminds him that he should not forget the beads 'for Zayn al-Dār'. How could a boy of at least ten years wish to wear ornaments for girls or small children? He obviously wanted to play his role of a female Zayn to the end. 'Allān calls him here *waladī*, 'my son', because he was very much worried not to have heard from him for such a long time. A similar expression in the letter of his wife referring to the boy whom she had just weaned, *Mediterranean society*, III, 194.

⁸⁴ The Arabic term *dār* had different meanings. See *Mediterranean society*, IV, 56. Here, the first *dār* refers to a compound known by the name of 'Arūs; the second refers to a building or apartment within the compound called after a person described as 'the Levite', who had already died. The occupants were probably artisans or stationary merchants who could always be reached.

⁸⁵ The acrostic of a blessing for the dead, which was originally said by Abigail to David when they first met, I Samuel 25: 29.

⁸⁶ Ar. *balligh tu'jar*, rewarded by God; no payment to be expected. Very common at the end of letters.

'Allān did not sign, although there was plenty of space. As so often happened, the person prepared to carry the letter was in a hurry to leave. Not signing a letter was an expression of intimacy and friendship. I am not sure that this was intended here.

For the script of the letter see p. 456, above.